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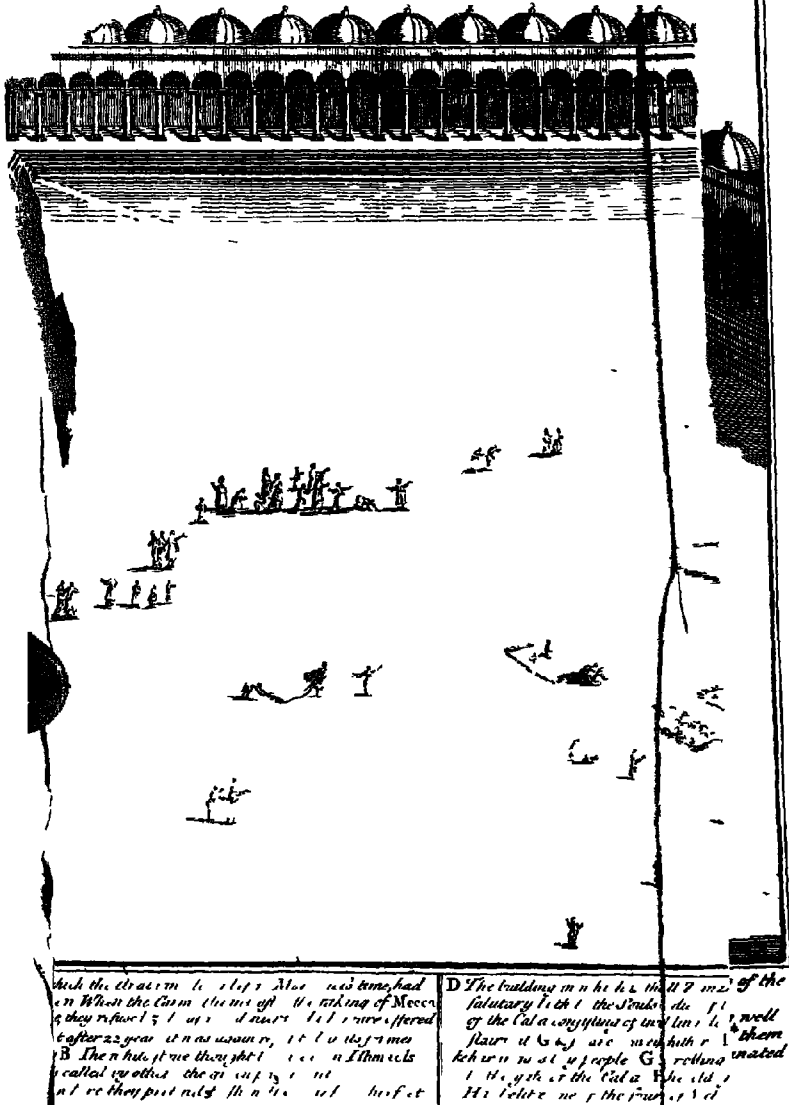
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THE RED SEA  
AND ADJACENT COUNTRIES  
AT THE CLOSE OF  
THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

SECOND SERIES  
No. C

ISSUED FOR 1949





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THE RED SEA  
AND ADJACENT COUNTRIES  
AT THE CLOSE OF  
THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY  
AS DESCRIBED BY  
JOSEPH PITTS  
WILLIAM DANIEL  
AND  
CHARLES JACQUES PONCET

*Edited by*  
SIR WILLIAM FOSTER, C.I.E.

LONDON  
PRINTED FOR THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

1949

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	ix
FULLER TITLES OF AUTHORITIES . . . . .	xxxix
THE JOURNEY OF JOSEPH PITTS FROM ALGIERS TO MECCA AND BACK . . . . .	1
THE JOURNEY OF WILLIAM DANIEL FROM LONDON TO MOCHA AND BACK . . . . .	51
DANIEL'S ACCOUNT OF HIS EXPENSES . . . . .	86
THE JOURNEY OF CHARLES JACQUES PONCET FROM CAIRO INTO ABYSSINIA AND BACK . . . . .	89
DE BRÈVEDENT'S ACCOUNT OF THE JOURNEY TO SENNAR	166
LETTER FROM PONCET AT JIDDA TO THE FRENCH CONSUL AT CAIRO . . . . .	168
THE INTERROGATION OF PONCET AT CAIRO . . . . .	170
APPENDIX :	
OVINGTON'S NOTES ON THE RED SEA PORTS . . . . .	173
NOTE ON LUDOLF'S MAP OF ABYSSINIA . . . . .	182
INDEX . . . . .	186

## ILLUSTRATION

PITTS'S PLAN OF THE TEMPLE AT MECCA	FRONTISPIECE
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### MAPS

PONCET'S ROUTE . . . . .	FACING PAGE xxv
LUDOLF'S MAP OF ABYSSINIA . . . . .	AT END



## INTRODUCTION

**A** PART from their brevity, which precludes separate publication, the three narratives here reprinted have an underlying unity that amply justifies their presentation in one volume. True, each has its special characteristics and its own claim to recognition. Pitts was the first (and for a long time the only) Englishman to penetrate into the holy cities of Islam, so jealously guarded against infidel intrusion; Daniel made a gallant pioneer effort to journey from London to India by the Red Sea route; and Poncet's is the only first-hand description of Abyssinia by a European between the expulsion of the Portuguese in 1633 and the visit of Bruce in 1769-71. Nevertheless, the narratives have much in common, and supplement one another to a remarkable extent. All three travellers were contemporaries, and two of them actually met. All three were concerned with a definite geographical area—the Red Sea and the countries bordering thereon (Egypt, Arabia, Abyssinia); all three made lengthy voyages on that sea in native craft and endured the resulting inconveniences so vividly described at a later date by Sir Richard Burton; Pitts and Daniel both deal with Cairo, though from different angles; the latter's hearsay accounts of Mecca and Medina are corrected by the former's eyewitness descriptions; while both Daniel and Poncet give detailed accounts of the Sinai peninsula and its celebrated Greek Monastery. Each traveller makes his contribution, and the result is a striking picture of north-eastern Africa as it was at the close of the seventeenth century.

Concerning Joseph Pitts, the author of the first narrative, little is known save what can be gleaned from his book. That he was born in 1662 or 1663 is deduced from the fact that he was about fifteen at the time of his capture. Of his father we learn only that his Christian name was John; that he resided in Exeter; that he was a Nonconformist; and that he survived at least until his son's return from captivity in 1695. He seems to have given the boy a fair education, for though the latter must have left school at an early age, he had learnt to read, write, and cipher well. Brought up in a pious family, he was of a sober, steadfast disposition; and being naturally intelligent



and self-reliant, he was well prepared for a career of extraordinarily varied character, calling for uncommon qualities of endurance and adaptation to circumstances.

Being of an adventurous turn, the youthful Joseph prevailed upon his father to allow him to go to sea. This had disastrous results for the lad, for in 1678 the small vessel in which he was serving was captured by an Algerian corsair off the coast of Spain, and he was taken to Algiers and there sold as a slave. His first owner used him rigorously; but after a few months he disposed of him to another purchaser, who in turn presented him to a brother living at Tunis. Whilst there, the English consul and two English merchants, taking pity on the lad, made offers to buy his freedom for him. Greatly to his disappointment these efforts failed, for the price demanded proved too high. After a while he was taken back to Algiers, where his master determined to force him to become a Muslim. For a considerable period Pitts withstood manfully blows, hard fare, and other cruelties; but at last, utterly exhausted and hopeless, he gave way and pronounced the required formula, though with a troubled conscience. His master suspected his sincerity and treated him little better than before. He was ill-fed, ill-housed, and (as he says) led 'a miserable life', until his oppressor lost his head for conspiring against the Dey. The widow sold Pitts to 'an old bachelor', who made him his body servant and treated him with much consideration. After about a year his new master decided to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, carrying with him his English slave. The result was the journey here chronicled.

Since this is fully described in the text, it is unnecessary to give here more than a bare summary. The travellers went by sea to Alexandria, where they stayed for about three weeks. Then they proceeded by boat to Rosetta, and so up the Nile to Cairo. In that city they remained until news came that shipping for the Red Sea voyage was available at Suez; whereupon the pilgrims proceeded to that port and embarked. A leisurely voyage of about a month brought them to Jidda, from which place they made their way to Mecca. After a long stay in the holy city and the due performance of the prescribed ceremonies, Pitts and his master returned with the usual caravan. This

time the route was entirely over land. It occupied forty days, of which three were spent at Medina, where Muhammad lies buried. From thence they proceeded northwards, rounding the gulfs of Aqaba and Suez, and thus reached Cairo. That city was found to be suffering from a severe visitation of the plague, and the two travellers hastened away to Alexandria and embarked for Algiers. The plague accompanied them, and many of the passengers died. Pitts himself caught the infection, but happily recovered.

It is a proof of his straightforwardness that Pitts nowhere attempts to fix the date of his pilgrimage. Evidently, dwelling as he did amongst Muslims and despairing of escape, he soon lost count of the Christian months and years. Nor is it easy to deduce the date from such particulars as he gives. Burton assigns it to 1680, and that view has been accepted in the article on Pitts in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; but it is almost certainly too early, for it does not make sufficient allowance for all that occurred between his capture and the start for Mecca, and it would make him only about seventeen then. The probabilities are that 1685 or 1686 would be more correct.<sup>1</sup>

Pitts tells us that his master (following what seems to have been a usual practice) gave him his freedom while they were at Mecca; that on returning to Algiers the two continued to live together; that after a while he took service in the Turkish army as an artilleryman; and that his first campaign was in the siege of the Spanish settlement of Oran. This, we know, was in 1688. Afterwards Pitts made two or three voyages (probably as a gunner) in local vessels, hoping to be recaptured by a European ship. Then came orders from Constantinople for the dispatch of Algerian shipping to Smyrna. This seemed to offer an opportunity for escape, and Pitts contrived to get appointed to one of the selected vessels. He carried with him a letter from the English consul at Algiers, dated in June 1694 and addressed to the English consul at Smyrna, asking him, in studiously ambiguous terms, to assist the bearer in effecting his object. At Smyrna, to his great disappointment, Pitts found no English or Dutch ship; but with the secret assistance of the

<sup>1</sup> In the article referred to on p. xii Miss Radford suggests 1684 or 1685.

consul and a merchant named Eliot, he succeeded after a time in getting aboard a French vessel, which a month later put him ashore at Leghorn. A cold and tedious journey through Germany and the Low Countries brought him at last to Harwich, apparently in the spring of 1695. There his joy at finding himself once more on English soil was dashed by his being pressed for the royal navy. However, his resourcefulness saved him. Recalling that he had a bill of exchange upon Sir William Falkener, a Turkey merchant in London, he wrote acquainting him with his sad predicament, whereupon that gentleman promptly obtained from the Admiralty a letter of protection which secured for Pitts immediate release. He hastened at once to Exeter, and his story ends with a dramatic account of the joyous welcome he received from his father. His mother had been dead about a year.

Of the rest of his career hardly anything is known. He appears to have lived quietly at Exeter until his death, which the notice in the *Dictionary of National Biography* guesses at about 1735. The subject has been ably dealt with by Miss Cecily Radford, in a paper read before the Devonshire Association in 1920 (*Transactions* of that society, vol. 52).<sup>1</sup> This contains not only an excellent account of our traveller's career and a good bibliography but also the results of a search of possible local sources. Miss Radford thinks that, as a Dissenter, Pitts was probably baptized at James's Meeting and buried in the free cemetery at Friernhay, and she adds that in both cases the records are no longer extant. She found that the will of a Joseph Pitts was proved at Exeter in December 1739, and considers it likely that it was the traveller's. If so, he left a widow (Hannah) and several children (including a Mrs. Elizabeth Skutt). The amount of the estate is not given, but apparently it was only moderate.

Pitts's remarkable experiences evidently excited much interest, and (as he tells us in his preface) he was importuned by

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Mr. N. S. E. Pugsley, City Librarian, Exeter, for drawing my attention to this paper and for kindly lending me a copy for perusal. He also informed me that in the *Western Morning News* of 5 August 1937 it was stated that Pitts was born in the parish of St. Sidwell's, Exeter. A search of the parish registers yielded no result, but this may be accounted for by the fact that he came of a Nonconformist family.

many friends to publish the story. This he did in 1704, in a small volume printed at Exeter and bearing the title of *A Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mahometans . . . with an account of the Author's being taken captive, the Turks' cruelty to him, and of his escape*. Apparently it attracted considerable attention, for in 1717 a reprint was issued, without the knowledge or consent of the author, who says of it: 'I scarce ever saw a book printed on worse paper and so incorrect.' Some years later Pitts, having been assured that 'there hath been a great demand for it (especially in London) and that it is the best account of the Mahometan religion we have extant in our language', determined to prepare a fresh version. This third edition was published in London in 1731. In the preface Pitts says that he has thoroughly revised, corrected, and expanded the original text, and has added two plates, one showing the postures of Muslims at their worship, the other a view (now reproduced) of the temple at Mecca. This is the definitive edition, and from it has been taken our text. A fresh impression was issued in 1738, without alteration. The work was partially reprinted in a collection of voyages published in 1759-61 under the title of *The World Displayed* (vol. 17); and in 1810 a further reprint was appended to an edition of Maundrell's *Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem*. This calls itself the fourth edition, and in it the spelling is modernized. Later still, Sir Richard Burton, in his *Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (vol. II, appendix v), gave an account of Pitts's career, followed by long extracts from his book, relating particularly to his pilgrimage. To these Burton appended some useful notes, a number of which I have been permitted, by the courtesy of the publishers, Messrs. Bell & Sons, to quote.

It has not been thought desirable to reprint those portions of the work that deal at length with the religion of Islam or recount the author's experiences before and after the pilgrimage; for, interesting though they are, these sections have no bearing upon our subject. As a matter of fact the narrative here given forms rather less than a third of the text of the volume of 1731.

Turning now to the second traveller on our list, William

Daniel, we find the same scarcity of information regarding his career before and after the journey he describes. A few hints may be gathered from his narrative. In his preface he tells us that from his youth travelling abroad had been his chief delight. He was evidently well acquainted with France and proficient in the French language; and this is explained by his statement (p. 83) that he had lived for some time with an English firm settled at Marseilles. Italian he could read (p. 80), if not speak. As mentioned on p. xvi he had spent some years at Aleppo, and he was in Palestine in 1688 (p. 76). Since his name has not been found in lists of the Levant Company's servants, he was probably travelling for his own pleasure. In those parts he seems to have acquired at least a smattering of Arabic, for, in the expedition here recorded, although for important occasions he employed an interpreter, at other times he appears to have had little difficulty in making himself understood. His allusion to the execution of the highwayman Whitney suggests that he was back in London at the close of 1694. One fact that emerges is that he was possessed of considerable private means. This is shown by the terms which he accepted for the journey and by the fact that he actually spent from his own resources over £300 beyond what he received from the East India Company. Moreover, he added to his outlay by taking with him a personal attendant; and in the Company's records he is referred to as a 'gentleman' and an 'esquire'—terms which at that period were not lightly used.

To explain how it came about that Daniel was employed by the East India Company to carry dispatches to India, it is necessary to go at some length into contemporary history. At the beginning of 1700 the Company had for some time been battling for its existence. In the summer of 1698 the government had attempted to solve the long-standing dispute over the best way of conducting the trade with the East and at the same time to obtain for itself a much-needed loan. They had given the existing company notice that its monopoly would be terminated and its charter cancelled at Michaelmas 1701; and thereupon, with parliamentary sanction, the monopoly had been virtually sold to a new association, known as the 'English' East India Company (the earlier body being distinguished as

the 'London' East India Company). The price paid for the concession was the loan of the new company's capital (two millions) to the government at eight per cent. interest. The question of what was to become of the older body after the withdrawal of its charter was left unsettled, and this was the problem now troubling its Governor (Sir Thomas Cooke) and its 'Committees' (directors). It was true that, by a shrewd stroke of policy, they had subscribed £315,000 of the loan that formed the basis of the new company, and had thereby secured the right to continue trading to the value of that figure annually; but how could they go on trading when their charter ceased to exist? Not only did that charter govern the constitution of the company, but with its disappearance would go that body's legal position and its power to hold lands and buildings or in fact to do anything as a corporation. It owned the island of St. Helena and it was the lessee from the Crown of the island of Bombay. Presumably these would revert to the Crown upon the dissolution of the company; but the question would then arise of compensation for the latter's outlay upon buildings and fortifications. More important still was the problem of the concessions which had been obtained from Eastern princes; these would lapse, to the great detriment of the trade. Moreover, it was doubtful whether the new association, having lent the whole of its capital to the government, would be able to fill the gap that would be caused if the older body disappeared; and there were other European competitors only too ready to take advantage of any such opening.

An obvious solution of the difficulty was for Parliament to authorize the continuance of the London Company as a corporation, despite the loss of its charter; and when, at the beginning of 1699, that body presented a petition to the House of Commons, no demur was made to the introduction of a private bill with that object. The promoters, however, unwisely included a clause obnoxious to the new company, and the bill was rejected on the second reading. Some negotiations thereupon took place for the amalgamation of the two companies; but no progress was made, in view of the uncertainty of the position. After due deliberation, the London Company decided to make a fresh attempt to secure parliamentary

sanction for its continuance. Early in 1700 another bill was introduced, which was confined to authorizing the company to trade indefinitely (under its old name) as a legal corporation. No opposition was offered, and the bill received the royal assent on 11 April 1700. This was a resounding success for the London Company, and its stock, which had been standing at 70, rose to 149. It was, in fact, the turning-point in the struggle between the two companies, and laid the foundations for the amalgamation that took place a few years later.

The Court Minutes show that the first concern of the directors, after the passing of the act, was to convey the 'acceptable news' to their servants in the East. For this purpose the *Advice Frigate*, a vessel of 130 tons, was hired to proceed direct to Madras with the intelligence. In addition, since the sea voyage must inevitably take a long time, it was resolved to find, if possible, a messenger who would undertake to carry letters overland, by way of Syria and the Persian Gulf, to the settlements in western India. On 3 May 1700 a committee appointed for that purpose reported that it had discovered a suitable person in a certain William Daniel and had made a preliminary agreement with him. His appointment was at once approved, the letters he was to carry were signed and delivered to him, and on the following day he started on his mission. In the dispatch thus entrusted to him (I.O. Records: *Letter Books*, vol. 10, p. 310), which was addressed alternatively to 'the President and Council at Surat' or 'the General and Council at Bombay', Daniel's qualifications and the terms made with him were thus set forth:

'The bearer, Mr William Daniell, brings you the acceptable news of our being confirm'd by Act of Parliament, copy of which comes enclosed. He is a gentleman that has lived some years at Alepo and well knows that countrey, and therefore thinks himself thereby well qualify'd to undertake so long a journey. We have, for his encouragement, agreed to pay him one hundred pounds in hand, one hundred pounds at Marseilles, and one hundred pounds at Alepo, towards defraying the charges of himself and servant, and, in case he arrives at either of your places by the last of August, to pay him there the value of four hundred pounds, sterling or rupees. If he do[es] not get to you by the 31th August, we are to pay him nothing more than the three hundred pounds before mentioned. He desired

that he may be sent with the same good newes to the Fort [St George] or Bay [of Bengal]; which we can say nothing to here, but leave that to your management . . . If Mr Daniell should or should not arrive by the last of August, we have nevertheless agreed that he shall have leave to come home on any of our ships free of charge, and to have the quantity of one ton [of freight] allow'd him gratis.'

And so Daniel commenced his race against time—a race in which the odds were against him from the start. Crossing the Channel at considerable risk, he hurried at top speed through Paris and Lyons to Marseilles, where he arrived on 15 May. No ship was available there, and he decided to try the Italian ports. On the 17th he set out in a small coasting vessel for Genoa; but finding its progress intolerably slow, at San Remo he changed into another ship, and so reached Leghorn on the 26th. There he found that he had just missed a vessel on which he was counting to take him to Alexandretta (the port for Aleppo), and, anxious to push on at all costs, he embarked on a French ship, which landed him on 20 June at Alexandria, in Egypt. Here he at once hired a bark in which he could proceed to his Syrian destination, should he so decide; but he was in fact meditating a change of plan. During his voyage from Leghorn he had taken stock of his position. Nearly two months out of his precious four had elapsed. It would require some time to reach Aleppo; from that place to Basra he must allow at least another month, and at Basra he might not find shipping immediately available; then would come the voyage down the Persian Gulf and across to western India, and this would certainly prove lengthy. Would it not be better, since he was already in Egypt, to adopt the alternative route by the Red Sea? If he could get from Suez to Jidda or Mocha, he might then procure a passage on one of the Indian vessels about to return at the close of the shipping season; while at the latter port he might even find a European vessel which would carry him to India.<sup>1</sup> He determined to consult the Levant Company's

<sup>1</sup> Daniel was evidently unaware that this route had been successfully followed by the German von Harff (if his story is to be credited), by the Italian Varthema, and (only forty years before his own venture) by the Frenchman Bernier. The journey of the last-named is of special interest in the present connexion. On his way Bernier landed at Tor and visited Mt. Sinai. He also formed a project of crossing from Mocha to Massawa and from thence journeying to the Abyssinian



consul at Cairo, and wrote to him accordingly. The consul replied, warmly approving the plan, and Daniel thereupon hastened to Cairo, reaching that city at the end of June. The next caravan for Suez was not due to start for a week, and meanwhile Daniel was shown the 'sights' of the city. He made a useful friend in an English renegade, who not only procured for him a pass (*farmān*) from the Pasha of Egypt, authorizing him, in the name of the Turkish Sultan, to voyage in the Red Sea, but gave him in addition some useful introductions. Further, as he thought it advisable to pose as a merchant, Daniel laid in a stock of goods, as well as the necessary provisions for the voyage. Departing on 7 July, he arrived at Suez four days later; and finding a vessel about to sail for Jidda, he bribed the captain to take him on board. The voyage proved to be irritatingly slow, for, according to custom, the crew anchored every night. It was also stormy, and for four days the ship was aground on a reef. The consequent damage forced the captain to put into the port of Yenbo for repairs.

At that period the territories on both sides of the northern portion of the Red Sea formed part of the dominions of the Ottoman Sultans of Turkey, though the important province of the Hejāz was practically independent under the Sharif of Mecca, who was a law unto himself and openly reviled his distant overlord. The ports—on the western side down to Massawa and on the eastern side down to Qunfidha—were ruled by governors appointed from Constantinople, and their crumbling fortifications were manned by Turkish garrisons. From a point below Qunfidha the coast-line formed part of the kingdom of Yemen, which recognized no allegiance to the Turk, despite certain shadowy claims to suzerainty. Whether in Turkish or in Yemen territory, the governor was a despot whose activities were little likely to be questioned by a higher authority, and as a rule he was quite unscrupulous when an

court at Gondar; but he abandoned this idea on learning from the Armenian Murād (whom he later on encountered at Delhi as ambassador from the Abyssinian monarch) that Europeans were not safe in that country. More fortunate than Daniel, he secured a passage in an Indian vessel from Mocha to Surat, the voyage occupying twenty-two days. Bernier had some intention of publishing a detailed account of this portion of his wanderings, and it is to be regretted that he failed to do so.

opportunity for personal enrichment presented itself. Non-Muslims were specially an object of prey, since they were regarded as having no claims to justice or fair treatment.

Daniel quickly learnt how risky it was to come within the jurisdiction of one of these petty tyrants. Hearing on arrival at Yenbo that there were five Indian ships at Jidda preparing to depart for their own country, he immediately hired a boat and started for that place. But the news that a wealthy Frank had arrived, who was in a hurry to get away, roused the cupidity of the Governor, and Daniel's vessel was fired upon as it was about to leave the harbour and was forced to stop. He went ashore and was at once pounced upon and confined for the night. In the morning he was taken before the Governor, who accused him of being a spy and demanded '40,000 crowns or my head'. The Governor alleged that English pirates had recently taken a ship in which he and some of his relatives were interested, and said that 'he thought he could not do himself greater justice than to have satisfaction of me'. After much argument Daniel was permitted to send for some janizaries whom he had engaged as guards; and these men, having been primed and bribed beforehand, stoutly maintained that the Englishman was a peaceable merchant and a resident of Cairo and had the Sultan's authority for his voyage. Further, their headman agreed to become surety for the truth of these statements. In the end the Governor accepted a gratuity of about fifty pounds; while money and goods to the same value were distributed to members of his family and to his principal officers.

Released at last, Daniel hastened to Jidda, where he arrived on 29 August, only to find that the Indian ships had sailed three days before. For some time it had been obvious that he could not in any case reach India by the date stipulated and thus earn the promised reward; but he was none the less determined to perform his errand, if possible, before returning. So he resolved to pursue the Indian shipping down the coast, in the hope that they would have put into some port on the way. He therefore hired a vessel and hurried to a port which he calls 'Yemen'—probably Luhaiya. There he learnt that the ships he was chasing had passed two days before and were

making for Mocha. Securing some dromedaries, he set out the same night for that place—only to be brought back by order of the Governor, whom he had omitted to bribe. As a result Mocha was not reached until 13 September; and not only had all Indian shipping departed, but there was no European vessel in the port, as the Cairo consul had led him to expect. Daniel was in despair, for there was now no chance of transport to India being available for the next twelve months. He took counsel with a Hindu merchant, who said that his brother was starting for Muskat in a few days, and, if Daniel would go with him, he would probably find there some vessel bound for Surat. Our traveller, however, was by this time thoroughly disheartened and weary, and, 'having been already so often deceived', was loth to embark upon what might well prove to be a wild-goose chase. So he entrusted his packet of letters to the merchant's brother, who promised to send it on to India upon his arrival at Muskat. What happened to the packet is not known; but a letter from the President and Council of Surat to the Company, dated 10 October 1702, stated that it had not come to hand (*Factory Records, Miscellaneous*, vol. 5).<sup>1</sup> The news it would have communicated was, however, duly made known by the *Advice Frigate* (see p. xvi), which, leaving England about the middle of June 1700, reached Madras on 8 April 1701.

Sadly Daniel returned to the so-called 'Yemen', and from thence sailed for Jidda, where he arrived on 4 October. After spending two months in that port, he left on 8 December in a galley bound for Suez. On the way a call was made at Yenbo, and there a further delay ensued, for the captain's convenience. Departing again on 5 January 1701, the galley made its way

<sup>1</sup> It may be of interest to record that, very shortly after Daniel's failure, another packet from the Company, following the same route, actually succeeded in reaching Surat. The letters it contained were all dated 21 August 1700, and the packet was dispatched via Marseilles to Leghorn, with a request that it should be sent on to Aleppo. Consul Buriows, however, forwarded it to Consul Fleetwood at Cairo, leaving to him the duty of arranging for its further disposal, and Fleetwood entrusted it to someone bound for Jidda, where it was transferred to a vessel proceeding to India. It safely reached Surat, though not until September 1701 (*Letter Books*, vol. 12, p. 347, O.C. 8561). The long time thus taken was probably one reason why no further attempt was made to use the Red Sea route for letters.

slowly northwards, delayed by storms and contrary winds, until it was leaking badly and provisions were running short. The little harbour of Sherm, on the eastern side of the point of the Sinai peninsula, was at last reached; and here Daniel, sick of the sea, went ashore, resolving to make for the Greek Monastery on Mt. Sinai. Arriving there after a fatiguing and hazardous journey, he received a warm welcome from the Patriarch.

A rest of twelve days, spent partly in sight-seeing, braced the traveller for the ten days' journey by land to Cairo. That city, which was reached on 8 April, was found to be suffering from a visitation of the plague, so severe that all the European inhabitants had isolated themselves. On going to the English consul's house, Daniel was at first refused admittance; but after some parley, on stripping himself naked and washing with vinegar and water, he was allowed to enter and was made welcome. After a stay of twelve days he proceeded to Alexandria, from whence a French vessel carried him in twenty-five days to Marseilles. Upon arrival there he had to undergo a quarantine of forty days, the tediousness of which was alleviated to some extent by the kindness of friendly residents. He had written at once to the East India Company, narrating his ill success; and, this duty discharged, he felt at liberty to recruit himself by a little tour in Italy. Returning to Marseilles, he left for England in the middle of November and got home four days before the Christmas of 1701. We must not omit to chronicle that, whilst at Marseilles, he heard that the Mocha fleet, on which he had so eagerly sought to embark, had been cast away on its voyage to India. He could therefore console himself with the thought that the delays, which at the time had been so vexatious, had really saved him from a watery grave.

Two days after his return to London Daniel presented himself at the East India House and gave the Court of Directors a full account of his journey, producing, as a justification of his change of plan, the consul's letter encouraging him to try the Red Sea route. Thereupon he was desired to submit his story in writing. This he delivered in March 1702, and at a meeting held on the 18th of that month a committee was appointed to examine it, together with his contract, and to ascertain the

amount of money he had expended. The resulting report was considered on 20 April. This stated that the members had read the narrative, examined the contract, and interrogated Daniel, who had further submitted an account of his expenses (see p. 86), which showed that in addition to the £300 already drawn he had paid out rather over another £300. This outlay, we may note, was only to the time of his arrival at Marseilles on the return journey. After considering the matter, the Court resolved to make a further payment of £400, to cover his out-of-pocket expenses and leave him a slight gratuity (*Court Minutes*, vol. 38, ff. 340, 369, 405). Evidently it was felt that he had done his best and that his failure was not due to any remissness on his part.

Daniel's narrative of his experiences was published in this same year (1702), in a small volume of a hundred pages, dedicated to the Governor and Committees of the East India Company. Copies are not often met with, and one which came into the market in 1942 was priced at £3 10s. It has never been republished until now and seems to be little known, for I have found no reference to it in any of the works I have consulted. The Royal Geographical Society possesses a contemporary manuscript of the work, presented to it in 1940 by the British Records Association.<sup>1</sup> The latter body had no knowledge of its history, beyond the fact that it had been found among the papers of a firm of solicitors of long standing. In the absence of any specimen of Daniel's handwriting, the possibility cannot be excluded that it came from his pen. This manuscript has been compared with the printed text, and although the differences are few and unimportant, in one or two instances the manuscript has been followed in preference to the printed version.

From his narrative it is clear that Daniel's main pre-occupation throughout his journey was to push forward as rapidly as possible. Apparently he kept no detailed diary, but merely some fragmentary notes, and his reliance, when writing his report, was almost entirely upon his memory. This diminishes to some extent the value of his observations. One point may be briefly noted. In his dedication Daniel expressed a hope

<sup>1</sup> See my note in the *Geographical Journal* for July 1940.

that he had 'trod out a path that may be of use hereafter'. As we have seen, Bernier and other Europeans had forestalled him; but he is entitled to the credit of having been the first Englishman to endeavour to reach India by way of the Red Sea. Until long afterwards he found no follower. In 1770 Sir Eyre Coote returned from India by the reverse route, and Eyles Irwin did the same thing ten years later (taking eleven months over the journey). In 1791 Captain John Taylor submitted to the India Board proposals for sending dispatches via the Red Sea (I.O. Records: *Home Miscellaneous*, vol. 436); but nothing came of the suggestion, and the organization of this route had to await the advent of the steam vessel. At long last, however, it became an established fact, thanks largely to the pertinacity of Thomas Waghorn; and in 1869 the opening of the Suez Canal made it a permanency.

We have now to deal with our third and most important traveller. The tedium of Daniel's enforced wait at Jidda on his return journey was much alleviated by the arrival from the opposite coast of a French doctor who had spent a considerable time in Abyssinia. For his part, the new-comer, who had not seen a European face for nearly a year and a half, was doubtless equally pleased to encounter Daniel, especially as the latter spoke French fluently. The two were able to spend about a fortnight together; and they would probably have journeyed to Cairo in company, had not the doctor been obliged to remain behind, to await the coming of an Abyssinian ambassador. Strangely enough, the Frenchman, in his narrative of his experiences, makes no allusion to Daniel; while the latter in his account does not give the former's name. Very little difficulty was found, however, in identifying him as Charles Jacques Poncet, who holds an important place in the list of European travellers in Abyssinia.

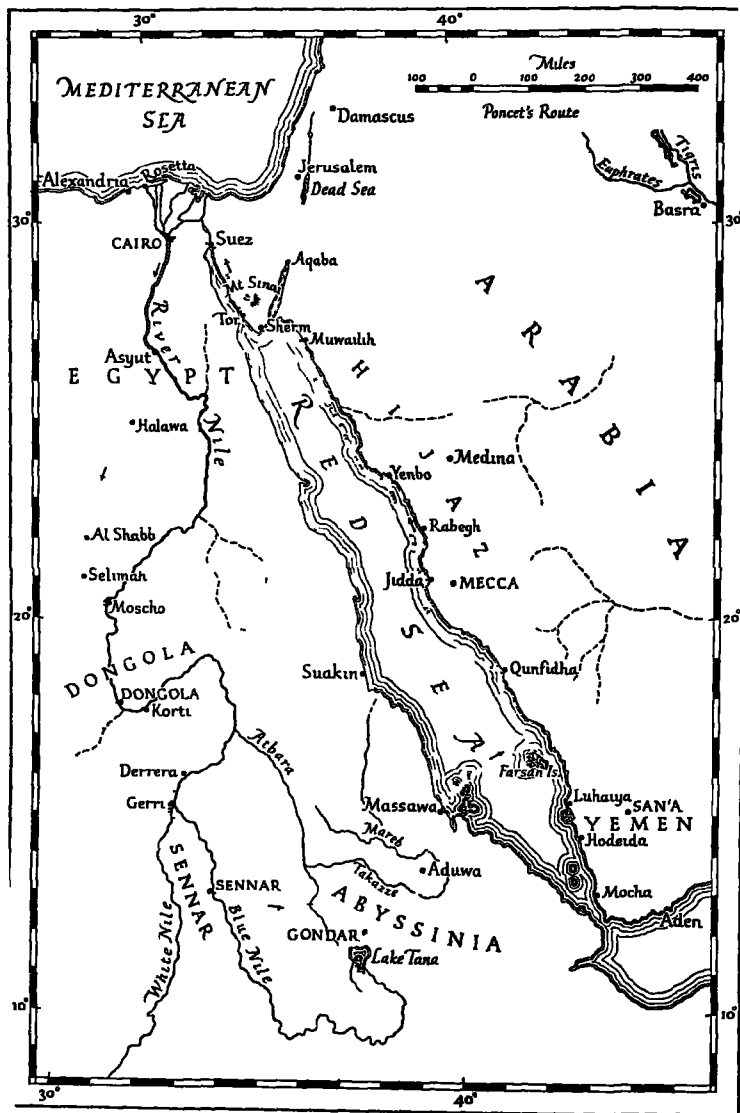
Concerning Poncet's career nothing appears to be known (apart from his own story) save what can be gathered from Le Grand's work on Abyssinia and the introduction (by Père Le Gobien) to the doctor's narrative, as printed in the *Lettres Édifiantes*. It is true that there is a short biography of the traveller (by Alfred Lacaze) in the *Nouvelle Biographie Générale* (tome 40, p. 738); but this contains nothing new and is at

times inaccurate. A more careful summary will be found in the revised edition of Michaud's *Biographie Universelle* (tome 34, p. 47); yet here again the writer makes no fresh contribution to our knowledge. Of Poncet's early history, the one small fact that emerges (from other sources) is that he came from Franche-Comté. When the story begins, he had been settled for some years at Cairo as an apothecary and medical practitioner and had gained a considerable reputation by some cures he had effected. In 1698 there arrived from Abyssinia a Muhammadan named Haji Ali, as agent for the Negus or Emperor of that country, charged, among other things, with the duty of procuring medical aid for the monarch and one of his sons, as they were both suffering from a troublesome disease. Poncet's name was suggested; and thereupon Haji Ali, who had been chosen for the mission because he too was a victim of the disease, became a patient of the doctor, and was speedily cured. He at once made overtures to Poncet to return with him to Abyssinia, and succeeded in securing his consent.

Such is the account given by Le Gobien, who may be supposed to have derived his information from Poncet himself. Bruce tells the story somewhat differently; and to understand his version it is necessary to recall that there was at the time an intense rivalry between two missionary bodies—the Franciscans and the Jesuits—each of which claimed the sole right to revive the Christianity of Nubia and to induce the Coptic church of Abyssinia to conform to the doctrines of Rome. The Franciscans had gained the ear of the Pope (Innocent XII), who favoured them as much as he dared; but the Jesuits (who were specially keen upon regaining the position they had once held in Abyssinia) enjoyed the favour of Louis XIV and could in consequence count upon the assistance of the French consul in Cairo, Charles De Maillet. Bruce says that, on the arrival of Haji Ali, the Franciscans, learning his errand, approached him with a proposal that he should take back with him two of their number, who were represented to be skilled in medicine, and to this the envoy agreed. When, however, the arrangement came to the ears of De Maillet, he promptly got into touch with Haji Ali and undeceived him as to the qualifications of the two Franciscans, at the same time recommending Poncet to







his notice as being a professional and well-known physician. The result was that he was selected for the task.

The Jesuits followed up the discomfiture of their rivals by securing the inclusion in the party of one of themselves. This was a certain Father De Brèvedent, who was eminent for his sanctity and learning and was passionately bent on proselytizing. Since it was well known that the Abyssinians were violently hostile to all Europeans, and especially to Catholic missionaries, it was arranged that he should be disguised as Poncet's servant, calling himself simply Joseph. De Maillet entrusted to Haji Ali some presents for the Negus, accompanied by a complimentary letter, in which he stated that he had promised the Pasha of Egypt, whose medical attendant Poncet was, that the doctor should return in a year or two, and begged His Majesty to release him accordingly. At a later date Poncet declared that this letter was very instrumental in securing for him permission to depart (Le Grand, p. 363).

Leaving Cairo at the end of May 1698,<sup>1</sup> the travellers proceeded by boat up the Nile as far as Manfalūt, the starting-point for caravans bound southwards across the Libyan desert. After considerable delay the caravan to which they had attached themselves began its toilsome journey across the sandy wastes. The Nile was encountered again at Moscho, and from thence they made their way to (Old) Dongola—now a heap of ruins but then the capital of a kingdom subordinate to that of Sennar. Leaving again at the end of 1698, their next stopping-place was Korti; and then, after following a rather devious route, they found themselves in the city of Sennar, the capital of a negroid kingdom, Muhammadan in religion, occupying the region between the White Nile and the Blue Nile, northward of 10° N.

At the court of that king they spent three months as honoured guests, and Poncet gives an interesting account of the country and its inhabitants. At Sennar they were overtaken by Father Grenier, who had been dispatched from Cairo with a message

<sup>1</sup> As mentioned on p. 93, all the dates given by Poncet are, of course, New Style. These have been allowed to stand in his narrative, but in this introduction, for the sake of uniformity with the rest of the volume, they have been corrected to Old Style.

of recall to Father De Brèvedent. It appears that before the party started there had been no time to obtain the permission of the Jesuit's superior, Father Verseau, who was not then at Cairo. On his return, Verseau disapproved of what had been done and dispatched Grenier accordingly. However, on his arrival the latter was overcome by De Brèvedent's earnest pleading to be allowed to continue his mission, now that the journey was half-accomplished; and Grenier went back alone. De Maillet had taken the opportunity to write to Poncet, saying that he had heard that an embassy from Abyssinia would be agreeable to Louis XIV and suggesting, therefore, that, should such a design be mooted, it should be adroitly furthered (Le Grand, p. 363). De Brèvedent, for his part, utilized the delay at Sennar (caused by the fact that unrest in the neighbouring country made travelling unsafe) by writing a long letter, a summary of which is given by Le Grand (p. 159) and will be found translated at p. 166.

Sennar was quitted at the beginning of May 1699. A difficult journey through unknown country followed; and then, on 23 June, the travellers reached Bartcha, half a day's journey from Gondar, the capital of Abyssinia. At Bartcha a halt had perforce to be made, for both Poncet and the Jesuit were too ill to continue the journey. De Brèvedent, with a constitution sapped by his constant austerities, had been suffering for some time from dysentery, and was extremely weak. Six days after their arrival he expired, to the great grief of his companion; and on the following day he was buried in the local church.

It was not until 11 July that Poncet was sufficiently recovered to make the short journey to Gondar. On the next day he was seen by the Negus (Iyasu I), who urged him to rest until he had regained his strength. Accommodation was provided for him in the enclosure of the royal palace, and the monarch made frequent visits to him in private. His formal reception took place on 2 August, and on the following day the Negus and his son began their course of physic. Poncet nowhere states the nature of the ailment. Bruce affirms that the royal patients 'were both of a scorbutic habit, which threatened to turn into a leprosy'; and Budge says much the same. In any case the cure appears to have been speedy and lasting, and to have

earned for the Frenchman both gratitude and esteem. Although, in view of the popular hostility towards all Europeans, Iyasu found it necessary to keep their intercourse as secret as possible, he treated the doctor with great consideration, and even familiarity, during the rest of his stay.

The monarch's favour was naturally reflected in the behaviour of his chief officials, and, despite the inconveniences caused by primitive housing and disagreeable diet, the nine months Poncet spent in Gondar and its neighbourhood were not, it seems, unhappy. He prudently kept as secluded as possible, and his ignorance of the language must have been a handicap; nevertheless, he managed to acquire a fair stock of information about the country and its inhabitants. Gondar stands six thousand feet or more above sea-level; and the doctor enjoyed the temperate climate and admired the glorious scenery, with its tangle of mountains and rivers and its pastures fragrant with roses and gay with other wild flowers. But his movements were necessarily limited. Protected by a strong guard, he made some excursions in the vicinity of the capital; and his royal host not only took him to a palace on one of the islands in Lake Tana but offered to send him (under escort) to the sources of the Blue Nile (then regarded as the main stream of the famous river). The offer was declined, on the score of ill health, and Poncet contented himself with gleaning such information on the subject as he could collect by inquiry. This agrees well enough with the descriptions given by those who have actually visited the spot.

As regards the political situation Poncet tells us little. Reading between the lines, however, we discern that Iyasu needed all his astuteness to maintain his authority. Though he was personally respected, his realm was little more than a loose bundle of tribal areas (Poncet calls them 'kingdoms'), held together mainly by a fanatical attachment to the Coptic faith, and a fierce hatred of foreigners. The turbulent local chiefs had little affection for the reigning dynasty, and many of the officials surrounding the Negus were untrustworthy. Iyasu himself was suspected of unorthodoxy and of a leaning towards foreign ideas; while the fact that his great-grandfather had done his best to hand over the country to Catholicism was

never forgotten. His constant campaigning was probably due in large measure to his desire to keep powerful forces afoot for his own security; and how precarious that was is shown by Poncet's story of the attempts made to incite Prince Fasil to usurp the throne, and still more by the fate that overtook the monarch himself only a few years after the traveller's departure.

For the Negus Poncet seems to have felt a genuine respect and even affection; though his declaration that, had health permitted, he would gladly have remained in attendance upon him indefinitely we must regard as an exaggeration. He was in reality anxious to return to Egypt, and in the spring of 1700 symptoms of internal trouble gave him an excuse for soliciting permission to depart. After vainly trying to dissuade him, the Negus consented, though he made him swear to return as soon as he was restored to health. He gave the doctor a gold bracelet and a dress of honour, and deputed a high official, with a guard of a hundred horsemen, to see him safely out of the country. Accordingly, on 22 April 1700 Poncet quitted Gondar and commenced his journey towards Massawa, on the Red Sea—a safer and pleasanter route than that by which he had come.

Iyasu had decided to reply to De Maillet's overtures by dispatching an ambassador with letters and presents for Louis XIV. Poncet makes no claim to have influenced this decision; but it seems probable that, having in mind the hints given him by De Maillet, he unobtrusively did what he could to help it forward, though in the end it involved him in many difficulties, owing to the unsuitability of the person chosen for the duty. The Negus's chief adviser on foreign affairs was an aged Armenian merchant,<sup>1</sup> who had been repeatedly employed by him as envoy to various eastern countries. This minister (desiring perhaps to rid himself of a troublesome hanger-on) procured the nomination of his nephew, who bore the same name and was of the same nationality as himself; and it was arranged that he should travel in company with Poncet. Owing, however, to trouble over the provision of the presents, he was not ready to start as soon as the doctor; and the latter, anxious to be gone, decided to proceed to the coast and wait for Murād

<sup>1</sup> Budge (vol. II, p. 423) calls him Murād Tchelebi.

there. After a leisurely journey, Massawa was reached on 7 September. A month and a half passed, and there was still no sign of the laggard ambassador; so Poncet appointed Jidda as the next rendezvous, and himself sailed for that port.

The voyage, in a native craft, lasted from 18 October to 25 November. At Jidda, as already mentioned, the doctor encountered Daniel, and they passed some pleasant days together. A less agreeable episode was the raiding of the town by the Sharif of Mecca, who exacted a heavy ransom from the governor and residents. The coming of Murād was still delayed, and a letter from him advised Poncet to go on to Mt. Sinai, where the ambassador would join him later. Nothing loth, the doctor continued his voyage at the beginning of 1701, and (like Daniel) landed at the southern end of the Sinai peninsula. From thence he made his way, via Tor, to the monastery of St. Catherine, and there he was warmly welcomed by the Greek Patriarch, who had been his patient at Cairo some years before and was now needing further treatment.

After spending a month at the monastery without news of the ambassador, Poncet was on the point of departing in despair when he learnt that Murād was near at hand. On arrival the ambassador stated that at Jidda the Sharif of Mecca had taken from him the Ethiopian children whom he was conducting to France for presentation to the king, and that the vessel conveying the bulk of the presents had been wrecked near Tor. Nevertheless, he was determined to carry through his mission, and, after allowing him a rest of five days, the pair departed by land for Cairo, by way of Tor and Suez. After reaching the latter port Poncet pushed on in advance and arrived in the Egyptian capital on 10 June 1701; Murād followed him the next day (Le Grand, p. 414).

At this point the doctor brings his narrative to a conclusion. For the rest of the story—which is not without a comic side—we must go to Le Grand and the documents printed by him. These are very detailed, and for the present purpose a mere summary must suffice. Nearly all the principal characters quarrelled violently one with another. Between De Maillet and the ambassador relations soon became strained. The

French community in Cairo had learnt with disgust that Murād had been recognized as having been a cook and valet at Aleppo and at Cairo, who had later gone, via Jidda, to Massawa, intending to join his uncle in Abyssinia. It was added that, while at Massawa, being destitute of means, he had set up as a seller of brandy, which was looked upon as a low-down occupation. Was it likely (it was asked) that the Negus would have sent a man of such antecedents as ambassador to a European monarch? Insinuations were not wanting that the embassy was a bogus affair, the result of a plot between Murād and Poncet. The former made matters worse by his arrogant and boorish behaviour to all who visited him; while Poncet made no secret of the enmity he felt towards the envoy. De Maillet was in an awkward position. He had discovered that the idea conveyed to him that an embassy would be welcomed in Paris was no more than an expression of private opinion, and he had since learnt authoritatively that it was baseless. Yet here (largely as the outcome of his own suggestions) was an ambassador arrived, with every intention of proceeding to France; and in this he was being encouraged by the local Jesuits, who hoped to use him to facilitate their re-admission to Abyssinia. De Maillet was not ignorant that in eastern countries the status of ambassadors was very different from what it was in the west. They were not usually persons of importance, for they had no authority to negotiate and their duties consisted mostly in carrying letters and presents to the monarchs to whom they were accredited and in bringing back any that might be entrusted to them in return. Moreover, he was aware that, in the case of Abyssinia, it was the custom of the Negus to employ for such purposes foreign merchants, without giving them any suite or money for expenses (*Le Grand*, p. 366). But he seems to have really felt some doubts of the validity of Murād's mission; and in any case he was reluctant to incur the responsibility of passing him on to the French court. He therefore played for time. Poncet was called to the consulate and officially interrogated (see p. 170). Murād was notified that he must submit his credentials to De Maillet for verification, and the latter did not hide his annoyance that the Negus had failed to reply to the letter he

had himself addressed to him. Thereupon Murād made a clumsy attempt to deceive the consul by forging some documents, but this was easily detected and only served to increase the distrust with which he was regarded. Matters were further complicated by the intervention of the Pasha of Egypt, who, enraged to find that there was neither letter nor present for him, demanded to examine the letter to Louis XIV. Terrified by his threats, Murād surrendered the missive; and it was only with great difficulty that De Maillet recovered it and returned it to the ambassador.

In the end the power of the purse prevailed. Murād had no funds, and De Maillet's withdrawal of the allowance he had hitherto made to him brought about a compromise. It was arranged that Poncet, Father Verseau (the head of the Jesuits), and the chancellor of the consulate should proceed to France, carrying with them the letter to Louis XIV and a few presents which Murād seems to have contrived to save. Should the French monarch signify his wish to receive the ambassador, Murād was to follow the party to Paris, in the meantime he would wait at Cairo, and De Maillet would defray his expenses.

Poncet and his companions started on their mission in September 1701 and arrived in Paris towards the close of the year. They were duly presented to the king; and the doctor had the satisfaction of parading in the court dressed in the robe of honour and wearing the gold bracelet given to him by the Negus (Le Grand, p. 163). Some doubt seems to have been felt as to the genuineness of the imperial letter, but it was decided to accept it, to furnish Murād with presents for himself and his master, to intimate that an embassy would be sent later, and to instruct De Maillet to continue to defray the ambassador's expenses until he started on his return journey (*ibid.*, p. 164). Thereupon the chancellor went back to Cairo; while Verseau and Poncet went round by Rome, where they had an interview with the Pope, to whom they presented a letter from the Negus, inviting the dispatch of missionaries to his country.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, His Holiness sent out a Franciscan, Dom Joseph, with a letter addressed to the Negus. He returned in 1703, bringing a reply (dated in January 1702) together with

<sup>1</sup> The authenticity of this document is questioned by Le Grand (p. 164).



seven young Abyssinians to be instructed in the Roman faith (Budge, vol. II, p. 424).

In Paris the attention of the king and his ministers was engrossed by the War of the Spanish Succession, and the idea of cultivating relations with Abyssinia was allowed to drop. But in Egypt both De Maillet and the Jesuits were determined not to abandon the attempt. As recorded on p. 168, two of the latter had managed to reach Gondar in 1701, but popular hostility had enforced their speedy departure, and they had died on the way back. A lay mission seemed the only course open; and official sanction was obtained for the dispatch of an envoy, carrying with him an imposing array of presents. In France it was expected that De Maillet himself would head the party, but he preferred to entrust the task to Noir Du Roule, vice-consul at Damietta. He started from Cairo in the middle of 1704 and, following in Poncet's footsteps, reached Sennar in May 1705. There he was delayed six months; and then, when on the point of leaving for Gondar, he and his companions were brutally murdered, in circumstances never fully explained.

Meanwhile, an alternative effort—apparently organized by the Jesuits—had likewise come to grief. A party, consisting of Poncet, a Jesuit (Father Du Bernat), and an interpreter, had been dispatched by sea in company with Murād. The returning ambassador was furnished with letters and presents for the Negus and his chief minister; and the party left Suez in November 1703 and made its way to Jidda, with the intention of embarking there for Massawa. On the voyage Poncet and Murād quarrelled violently, and, after waiting some time at Jidda, the party broke up. Lacaze, relying apparently upon Bruce's chronology, concluded that this was due to the receipt of news that Iyasu was dead and his kingdom convulsed by civil war; but, according to Le Grand (p. 251), Budge, and Mathew, the real date of these troubles was 1706, and so we must look elsewhere for an explanation. Le Grand refers (p. 167) to a letter written by Poncet, in which the whole blame for the failure was laid upon Murād, who was alleged to be the declared enemy of all Franks and intent upon preventing their admission into Abyssinia. However, bearing in mind the convictions he expressed when questioned at Cairo (pp.

170-2), one is inclined to suspect that at least a contributing factor was the doctor's own unwillingness to venture once more into that country. Possibly pressure from the Jesuits had induced him to make a start, but fear overcame him later. Whatever the reason, the trio separated. The Jesuit returned to Cairo (arriving there in March 1704), while Murād and Poncet went their several ways. The former judged (probably correctly) that it would be unwise for him to show his face at Gondar, and so he resumed his wanderings. To Poncet the idea of going back to Egypt may well have been repugnant, and he decided to try his fortune among his compatriots in India.

The last authentic news we have of Poncet is contained in an extract from a letter written to De Maillet in January 1708 by M. Pillavoine, the chief of the French factory at Surat (Le Grand, p. 434). This says

'about three years ago Mons. Charles Poncet arrived here from Mocha. He discoursed largely about his travels and particularly his expedition into Ethiopia. To us he seemed both a great talker and a great drunkard. After spending some months in Surat, he went on to Isfahan. There he married. If whilst he was here I had been aware that he owed you money, it would have been easy for me to recover it for you, as he certainly had then some means.'

The letter adds that Murād had died, either at Mocha or at Muskat. Lacaze declares that the same fate overtook Poncet in Persia in 1706. Apparently this is based on Le Grand's statement (p. 168) that he 'va mourir a Ispaham', but no date is there given.

The aspersions cast upon Poncet's character in the letter from Surat are found also (with others added) in a document of 1706 printed by Le Grand (p. 429), and that author himself adopted them and described the doctor (p. 159) as a vagabond destitute of honour or religion, a liar who deceived everyone who had dealings with him, and moreover a man of less than mediocre intelligence. These charges, however, are evidently malicious exaggerations, to say the least. Vain and garrulous Poncet may have been, in his last years he may have sought refuge in drink from his disappointments and vexations, but that he was either deceitful or stupid one cannot believe. Bruce

points out the inconsistency of De Maillet in first praising and then vilifying him; and it is difficult to credit that the Jesuits would have associated themselves with a man of notoriously bad character, or would have presented such a one to Louis XIV and the Pope. Moreover, Daniel, whose impartiality cannot be doubted, may be cited as a witness for the defence, for his intercourse with the doctor evidently left a good impression.

These slurs upon Poncet's character and attainments were followed up by attacks upon the credibility of his narrative, and for many years his work was under a cloud. He found at last a doughty defender in Bruce (who, by the way, made use of the 1709 translation here reproduced). While pointing out some errors and doubting the accuracy of other statements, he stoutly maintained the value of the doctor's account of his travels. 'By all candid readers,' he wrote (vol. iii, p. 509), 'this itinerary, short and incomplete as it is, will not fail to be received as a valuable acquisition to the geography of these unknown countries of which it treats.' In more modern times, Bent (p. 46) has recorded his opinion that 'in nearly every respect Poncet (as far as I saw) is accurate, far more so than Bruce'. Jones (p. 113), whilst accepting Bruce's verdict on the work itself, speaks of its author as 'ignorant and somewhat pretentious'. Mr. Heawood (p. 152) regards the book as furnishing a good description of the outward journey but adds that Poncet's account of Abyssinia has been received with some suspicion; and Mr. Baker (p. 478) takes much the same view. Finally, the latest writer on the subject, Dr. Mathew (who devotes a whole chapter to Poncet's narrative), remarks (p. 65) that 'as a witness he leaves something to be desired, since a wish to magnify the importance of his mission seems to have led him to praise uncritically both the Emperor Iyasu and the rare appointments by which he was surrounded'.

These varying verdicts seem to reflect a general opinion that Poncet's work, while important, is in some respects disappointing; that the second half hardly fulfils the promise of the first; and that in particular the portion relating to Abyssinia, considering the time spent by the author in the country and the special opportunities he enjoyed, is at once too meagre and too discursive. But it is only fair to bear in mind the circumstances

in which the narrative was produced. It appears to me almost certain that, when he started on his journey, Poncet had no intention of writing any account of it, and that throughout he kept no detailed diary. His visit to Gondar was for a specific purpose, and he had no literary proclivities or experience. Moreover, he may reasonably have thought that the making of any record of their journey ought to be left to his companion, De Brèvedent, who had joined him for the purpose of gathering information and who was well equipped for such a task. We may even go a little farther in our conjectures and urge that there is at least some evidence that the Jesuit did actually keep a journal or at least full notes, for the brief and unsatisfactory summary (reproduced on p. 166) of his letter from Sennar reads as though that document had some such record behind it. Any material of this kind would, upon the death of De Brèvedent, pass into the keeping of Poncet, who would naturally make use of it when he came to write his narrative. This would afford some explanation at once of the discrepancy between the two parts which has already been mentioned and of the resemblances between passages in the Jesuit's letter and Poncet's text; and, by the way, it may have been from this source that Poncet took the latitudes of Sennar and Giesim (pp. 102, 110), the determination of which he expressly attributes to his companion. When left to himself, there is no indication that the doctor started a diary, though he may have made some notes. In the Abyssinian portion dates are conspicuously absent; while, as regards the homeward journey, he distinctly states (p. 144) that he made no note of the places through which he passed between Gondar and Massawa. I conclude, therefore, that when, in view of the interest excited by his journey, he decided to write an account of it, he relied, for that section of his narrative, almost entirely upon his recollections, fortunately still fresh. We ought not to blame him if, in such circumstances, he attempted nothing more than a brief, straightforward account of his experiences; and it must be owned that this he accomplished with no small success. Doubtless, set side by side with Bruce's eight ponderous tomes, the slender volume from which our text is taken makes but a poor showing; yet it has an interest and value of its own, as Bruce

was quick to perceive. If it did no more than give its lifelike (though perhaps rather idealized) portrait of the Negus Iyasu, that alone would be a contribution of permanent value to Abyssinian history; but it contains a great deal more than this, as I think most readers will agree.

Something should here be said about the bibliography of Poncet's narrative. It was evidently written not long after his return to Cairo. While in France the doctor gave his manuscript (or a copy) to Father Charles Le Gobien, S.J., who arranged for its publication, perhaps less as a contribution to geographical knowledge than as a memorial of Father De Brèvedent. It received the necessary imprimatur in July 1704, and it would seem to have been thereupon published, for in a document of 1706 reproduced by Le Grand (p. 430) occurs a definite reference to Poncet's 'relation qu'il a fait imprimer de son voyage d'Ethiopie'. However, an extensive search (including the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris) has failed to reveal the existence of any copy of this edition, and the earliest French text available is that which forms the fourth volume of the *Lettres Édifiantes*, issued in 1713. The English version here reprinted appeared in 1709. It has no preface, and the name of the translator is not given; but the presumption is that it was based upon the vanished French edition. A German translation was issued in 1728, but this I have not seen. In 1743 John Lockman published (in two volumes) a work entitled *Travels of the Jesuits into Various Parts of the World*. This consisted of selected narratives translated (and annotated) by him from the *Lettres Édifiantes*, and Poncet's account occupies pp. 178-278 of the first volume. Probably Lockman was unaware of the previous English version, for otherwise he would scarcely have taken the trouble to make a fresh translation. A second edition of vol. i appeared in 1762, and was described as 'corrected'; but, so far as Poncet's narrative is concerned, no alteration is discernible. John Pinkerton, in his *General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1808-14), reprinted (vol. xv, p. 61) Lockman's version, both text and notes. The latter, by the way, have proved of little service for the present edition.

The text here given has been collated with the French version

of 1713. From this a few omissions have been made good, and the original word or phrase has been quoted (in square brackets) in cases where this helps the meaning. Whether Father Le Gobien altered the author's wording in any respect, as Bruce (ever suspicious of Jesuits) was inclined to believe, can only be a matter of conjecture. In any case such editorial amendments are not likely to have gone farther than the elucidation of obscurities or the smoothing out of a roughness here and there.

A few documents have been added from other sources, and a contemporary account of the Red Sea ports has been printed as an appendix. Ludolf's map of Abyssinia has been reproduced to show the state of knowledge of that country in Europe at the time. The value of this interesting piece of cartography is well brought out in the bibliographical note on p. 182, which Mr. Skelton has kindly contributed at my request.

Although I have thrice traversed the Red Sea from end to end and have touched at some of the ports in the area, such cursory glimpses give no real knowledge of the countries described in this volume. I have therefore been obliged to depend to a great extent upon expert assistance, which has been accorded in generous measure. My friend, Professor Arberry, Lit.D., allowed me to submit to him a long list of Arabic and Turkish words and phrases for transliteration and explanation; while Lieutenant-Colonel J. Eadie was good enough to render similar help in the case of Amharic terms. Sir Edward Salisbury, K.C.B., the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, kindly examined, in conjunction with Mr. J. E. Dandy, of the Natural History Museum, the descriptions given by Poncet of various trees. Dr. Hugh Scott, F.R.S., of the same museum, a well-known authority on Arabia, responded to my inquiries with the greatest courtesy. My researches in the India Office records were made with the help of Mr. C. M. H. Burton, of the Records department. Mr. C. F. Beckingham kindly made some useful suggestions; and much aid was forthcoming from Mr. R. A. Skelton, the secretary of the Hakluyt Society, particularly the valuable note already mentioned. To one and all, as likewise to other helpers mentioned in the course of the work, I tender my grateful thanks.



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I  
AN ACCOUNT BY  
JOSEPH PITTS  
OF HIS JOURNEY FROM  
ALGIERS TO MECCA  
AND MEDINA  
AND BACK

c. 1685

Extracted from his

*Religion and Manners of the Mahometans*

(Third edition, 1731)



[*An Account by Joseph Pitts of his Journey from  
Algiers to Mecca and Medina and back.*]

GOING on pilgrimage to Mecca is a duty incumbent on every Mussulman, if in a capacity of health and purse; but yet a great many who are so live in the final neglect of it.

There are four caravans which come to Mecca every year, with great numbers of people in each. There is first the Moggarib<sup>1</sup> caravan, which comes from the west, from the Emperor of Fez and Morocco's country (from which parts they all go by land) and toucheth at Egypt, where they take in what provision will serve to Mecca and back again to Egypt. The *Emmir Hagge* [*Amir Haji*], or chief leader of the caravan, makes a stop at every town he passeth through, that so all such persons as are desirous to go to Mecca that year may, if they please, go in company with him. This *Emmir Hagge*, in whatsoever town he comes, is received with a great deal of joy, because he is going about so religious a work, and it is who can have the favour and honour of kissing his hand, or but his garment. He goes attended in much pomp, with flags, kettle-drums, etc., and loud acclamations do, as it were, rend the skies. Nay, the very women get upon the tops of the houses to view the parade or fine show; where they keep striking their four fingers on their lips softly, as fast as they can, making a joyful noise all the while, which sounds somewhat like *yow, yow, yow*, hundreds of times.

The second caravan goes from Misseer or Messe, i.e. Grand Cairo<sup>2</sup> in Egypt; which is join'd by great multitudes, because it is better arm'd and they go with more safety under its protection. And it is also more pleasant, because they go every one in order and each knows his place; so that there arise no quarrels or disputes at all on the road about precedence. With this caravan is sent the covering of the *Beat Allah* [*Bait Allah*: see p. 28], or 'House of God', of which I shall give a description by and by.

<sup>1</sup> Arabic *Maghrib*, 'the West'.

<sup>2</sup> *Misr* is used in Arabic both for Egypt and its capital. 'Cairo' is an italianized form of al-Qāhira, the new city built in 969.

The third caravan is call'd *Sham*<sup>1</sup> *Carawan*, which brings those that come from Tartary and parts thereof, and also from all Turkey, Natolia,<sup>2</sup> and the land of Canaan, without touching at Egypt.

The fourth is call'd *Hind* [i.e. Indian] *carawan*, which comes from the East Indies and brings many rich and choice goods, which are sold to all sorts of persons who resort to Mecca.

These four caravans jump all into Mecca together, there being not above three or four days difference in their arrival, which usually is about six or seven days before the *Curbaen Byram* [Arabic *qurbān* and Turkish *bairam*], i.e. 'the Feast of Sacrifice'.

But it may be ask'd, perhaps, by some who know, or at least have heard or read of, the town of Mecca, how such great numbers of people can possibly have lodging and entertainment for themselves and beasts in such a little ragged town as Mecca is.<sup>3</sup> I answer, as for house-room, the inhabitants do streighten themselves very much, in order at this time to make

<sup>1</sup> Burton (vol. II, p. 122 n.) says that this word, 'properly speaking, means Damascus or Syria'.

<sup>2</sup> Anatolia, meaning Asia Minor.

<sup>3</sup> 'I had the curiosity to look into the great and worthy Mr Collier's dictionary to see what was there said of Mecca and Medina, and I find his author very much out in both. And yet Davity, he saith, was a late writer. For Davity describes Mecca to be a very large place, and that the constant inhabitants make up about six thousand families, whereas it indeed is nothing near so populous, for I believe I may safely say there are not one thousand families in it, and the buildings are very mean and ordinary. I am sure, while I was in the town and when I took a view of it from a neighbouring hill, I could see nothing of beauty in it. I am not fond of contradicting authors, especially such as are thought to be great men, but I speak from knowledge, they only by hearsay. And as for Medina, Davity says 'tis but four, I say about ten, days journey from Mecca. He saith likewise that the pillars of the mosque of Medina are chaig'd with 3000 silver lamps, whereas in truth there are but few lamps, and almost all of glass. He saith, moreover, that Mahomet's tomb is richly adorn'd with plates of silver and cover'd with cloth of gold, which is not so, but I suppose he mistakes this covering for that of the *Beat Allah*, of which I have given an account. There are no lamps lighted about Mahomet's tomb by day; nor are all Turks absolutely bound to visit the tomb at Medina, for those who belong to the caravan which comes from the East Indies etc. go directly home from Mecca, because, if they were to make a visit to Medina, it would necessarily hinder them twenty days or more.' [Author's note] The work quoted is the *Great Historical, Geographical, Genealogical, and Poetical Dictionary*, by Jeremy Collier, the Nonjuror, while the French author on whom he relied was Pierre d'Avity, whose *Les Empires, Royaumes . . . du Monde* was published in 1614.

their market; and indeed, they make the *hagges* [*hajis*] or pilgrims pay for their house-room during their stay there (which is generally only about 16 or 17 days) more than the rent of a whole year amounts to. And as for such as come last, after the town is fill'd, they pitch their tents without the town, and there abide till they remove towards home. As for provison, they all bring sufficient with them, except it be of flesh, which they may have at Mecca; but as for all other provisions, as butter, honey, oil, olives, rice, bisket, etc., they bring with them as much as will last through the wilderness, forward and backward, as well as the time they stay at Mecca. And so for their camels they bring store of provender, etc., with them, for they meet with very little, if any, refreshment on the road.

When a ship is going for Alexandria, it is cried about the town of Algier, where I liv'd, that she will sail such a day; and then every one that designs for Mecca that year joyfully embraces the opportunity of going so far by sea, because they thereby save both a great deal of trouble and cost, which they must be at if they were forc'd to go by land.

You must observe that no Turks who are in pay [i.e. public employment] dare to undertake this pilgrimage without leave from the Dey;<sup>1</sup> and if they exceed a year in it, how much soever it be, when they return to Algier they must be contented with one year's pay, and lose all the rest.

That year I went from Algier to Mecca, we arrived at Alexandria in between thirty and forty days; which is reckon'd to be a very good passage. In our voyage we espied a small vessel one morning, which we chased till almost night. We hung out French colours, and the chased vessel did the like, but still shunn'd us; which made us continue our chace. When we came up with her, we found the men to be all Turks and Moors in a French vessel, who were brought from Malta and were designed to be carried to Leghorn and sold there. They told us that that very morning they were at an anchor at a certain place

<sup>1</sup> Turkish *Det*. This was the title familiarly given to the commander of the janizaries at Algiers, who at that time shared the power with the civil authority, the Pasha. In 1710, however, the Dey deposed his colleague, and thenceforward ruled alone.



and most of the French crew went ashore in their boat, leaving only two men and a boy on board; upon which the slaves rose, and kill'd the two Frenchmen and so became masters of the ship: that therefore, upon our hanging out French colours, they were in a great consternation at the first, but when they knew we were Turks, they as much rejoiced as before they feared. Some of them, men, women, and children, came on board of us and would by no means be perswaded to return to the French vessel again. They steer'd directly for Tunis, where (we heard) they safely arrived.

At Alexandria we tarried about twenty days. Historians undoubtedly have given a far more satisfactory account of this place than I can pretend to. However, I hope my observations may be accepted.

No doubt this was a very famous city in former times, and celebrated for its greatness and neatness; for the very ruins thereof leave an image of magnificence upon a man's mind. In my walks about it I saw many curious pieces of arch-work underground.<sup>1</sup> It is accommodated with a small branch or cut of Nilus, which fills their wells; and to these wells New Alexandria, which is about a quarter of a mile distant from the Old, and all the ships that resort thither, are beholden for fresh water. The mouths of these wells are intire stones of marble.

I think all the walls of this city are yet standing, with firm iron gates; unless some part of the upper work be fallen.

There are two churches in Old Alexandria; one of which is call'd by the name of *Bingbeer Drake*,<sup>2</sup> i.e. 'a thousand and one pillars', for so many (they say) it hath. When I went into it, there was with me a Spanish *renegado*, who belong'd to another patroon,<sup>3</sup> and a Turk of our company. This last show'd us a pillar of stone, unpolish'd, which looked not much unlike the stump of a dead tree, with knots on it; this, he told us, was a

<sup>1</sup> See Sandeison (p 40) and Thevenot (vol 11, p 390) They were vaulted cisterns used for storing water

<sup>2</sup> Turkish *bîn-bîr direk* The building is thus described by Pococke (Pinkerton's *Voyages*, vol 2v, p 168) 'One of the mosques is called the Mosque of the Thousand and One Pillars It is to the west, near the gate of Necropolis I observed in it four rows of pillars to the south and west, and one row on the other sides Here, they say, was a church dedicated to St Mark, and the Patriarch resided at it, being near the gate without which, it is said, the evangelist was martyred'

<sup>3</sup> See p 9

fig-tree which Christ cursed when he found it fruitless, saying: 'Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.' 'Here', added he, 'you will be tried whether you are right Mussulmans or no. You must stand about eight or ten paces from this tree and, being hood-wink'd,<sup>1</sup> must go towards it. If you go directly to it, you are right; but if you miss, you are not true Mussulmans.' He ty'd his own handkerchief about our eyes. The Spaniard went first, and miss'd. I then try'd what I could do, with my arms spread; and happening to touch the pillar, was pronounced the better Mussulman of the two.

There are several pillars in the ruins of Old Alexandria, of a vast bigness and height. One especially I did much admire, for it is as big about as three or four men can fathom and higher than I could throw a stone. It shines like glass, and the colour of it is much like Porphyrian marble.<sup>2</sup> It looks as if it were one intire piece, with some curious stone-work on the top of it; but I am perswaded it is artificially made, and consists of several parts, though so well done that the joinings are not discernible; *for I can't see how it would otherwise be possible to mount it and place it in its present position.* The country being very low, it serves for a sea-mark; for, as it is erected on a little rising ground, it is visible (as well as some palm-trees) a considerable time before the land. 'Tis called Pompey's Pillar.

This city of Alexandria is situated about two bow-shots from the seaside; and the New Alexandria joins to the sea. Here is not such a plenty at all times to be had as further up in the country, and the reason is because abundance of ships of all nations do continually resort hither and take off such supplies as they want.

Having tarried at Alexandria about twenty days, we embark'd for a place called Roseet or Rosetta, which is about two leagues (as I guess) up in the river Nilus; which river they also call *Bahor el Nile* [*bahr al-Nil*], i.e. the sea of Nilus.

I think we sail'd from Alexandria about five or six leagues

<sup>1</sup> This was originally a term in falconry, describing the drawing of a hood over the eyes of the bird, to keep it quiet. Later it was used to denote blindfolding in the game of blind man's buff. Now it has ceased to have any but a metaphorical significance.

<sup>2</sup> It is of polished red granite. Its name is due to a supposition that it marked the tomb of Pompey. Thévenot describes it at some length (vol. II, p. 388).

eastward of it before we came to the open mouth of the famous river Nile, where it emptieth itself into the Mediterranean Sea, with its muddy colour threat'ning as if it would change the whole sea into its own colour and sweetness. I drank of its water a considerable way off at sea, and found that it was no way salt, to my great satisfaction and according to what I had heard of it. I have been credibly informed that the Leghornese and Venetians oftentimes take in fresh water off the mouth of the Nile; and they may do it, indeed, without the least danger, the Turks having no ships to defend this coast.

This river is not only famous, among other things, for depth, but also for breadth. I cannot give an exact account of the breadth of it; but I well remember that, being on one side, I could scarce distinguish a man's from a woman's habit on the other. As for its depth, you may guess 'tis very considerable, because there are many of the Turk's merchantmen, navigated by Greeks, which are called by the name of *shykes* [Turkish *shāīqa*], somewhat like our English ketches, of two or three hundred ton, which come up to Roseet; and from thence it is navigable up to Boelock, or Boulack,<sup>1</sup> by great boats or barges deeply laden; and how much further up I know not. Roseet is the place where all the boats unload which come from Cairo and Alexandria; for the boats which come from Cairo are not fit to sail down for Alexandria, neither are the Alexandrian big boats fit to sail up to Cairo, for want of sufficient depth of water.

The mouth of Nilus is oftentimes very dangerous, and vessels are cast away there, by reason of its being chok'd up with sands; and many times vessels are forc'd to wait ten or twelve days for a clear mouth. Whether this bar may not be owing to an out hard wind, which checks the river and stops the sand which it brings down with it at its mouth, and when the wind is off the shore the freshet drives it away again, I shall leave to persons of better judgment to determine. I very well remember we were forced to wait several days for a clear mouth. In the meantime

<sup>1</sup> Bulāq, sometimes styled the port of Cairo. In ancient days the Nile ran under the walls of the city, but early in the fourteenth century the channel silted up and a new one was formed about a mile to the westward. As a result a settlement (known as Bulāq) sprang up at the point where the Nile boats arrived and departed. At the present day the space between the river and the old city is covered with houses and forms the European quarter of Cairo.

an ancient man of our company fell sick and died, and the next day (if I mistake not) we had a free passage. The Turks made this observation upon it, viz. that it was the place where God had determined he should be buried; for which reason we were obliged to wait so many days.

This river is well known and famous in most parts of the world. It hath another great mouth, where it empties itself also, some leagues eastward of the former, which is call'd by the natives Dimyot [Damietta]. Some have written of several more mouths; but if there be any such, they must be small streams which I never observ'd or heard of from the natives. I am sure of this, viz. that these two I have mentioned are the great ones, and navigable.

I was not in Egypt, but in Mecca, at the time of the Nile's overflowing. But they say it comes gradually and gently, not at all damnifying the inhabitants, who receive it with a great deal of joy. It remains about forty days on the land; and when it is gone off they make very great feasting and rejoicing. And good reason for 't, for they have a great dependance on the overflowing of this river; nay, were it not for it, Egypt would be a very barren country, even as the wilderness [i.e. the desert], which is not above half a day's journey from Grand Cairo; because they have little or no rain. After Nilus hath left the land, then is their time of tilling and sowing. When their seed is in the ground they are not much solicitous whether it rain or not; hardly reckoning themselves obliged to the showers of heaven. Many will not believe that it ever rains in Egypt, because most historians say the contrary; but I will be bold to affirm what I saw myself. While I was at Cairo it rained to that degree that, having no kennels in the streets to carry off the water, it was ankle-deep, and in some places halfway the leg. My patroon [master: Italian *padrone*] had at that time two bales of linen cloth on board a bark at Boelock, which were so damaged by the rain that we were forced to open them and dry the cloth piece by piece.

They have a particular mark when the flood is at its height. And they say that, if it rise a finger's breadth above it, it is a sign of plenty; but if it come so much short of it, 'tis a sign of scarcity.

This river affords plenty of fish and fowl, as wild ducks, geese, etc. I was credibly inform'd of a pretty way they have there to take wild ducks, viz. someone that can swim and dive very well takes the head of a dead duck and swims with it in his hand; and when he comes pretty near the ducks he dives, holding the duck's head just above the surface of the water, till he comes to the ducks, and then takes hold of them by the legs, and so catches them.

I have seen and handled a bird taken on this river, about the bigness of a heron, which hath under his throat a bag of skin, with the mouth of it towards the beak. This bird they call *sacca-cush*, i.e. bird water-carrier;<sup>1</sup> and, like dotterels,<sup>2</sup> they say that, when Abraham built the temple at Mecca, these birds supplied him with water. I remember that, when we were sailing up the river Nilus towards Cairo, one of our company shot one of these water-carriers, thinking it to be a wild goose; but when it was known what it was, it was much lamented, even with tears, that such a creature should be so kill'd.

As for crocodiles here, I saw none.

The river Nilus is not clear of robbers, who rob in boats. They are most bold at that time of the year in which the *haggas* are a-going from Rosetta to Grand Cairo; knowing they must carry sums of money with them. We were afraid once they were coming to attack us; but, having arms, we fired upon them and they soon made off.

There are towns all along its banks, insomuch that you are no sooner out of the sight of one but you are in sight of two or three more. They say it is above 250 miles up from Rosset to the country where the famous city of Cairo stands; and in all this way scarce an hill as big as an house to be seen. About four or five miles on this side Cairo this river parts and betakes itself into two streams; the one runs to Rosset, the other to Dimyott.

The inhabitants of Egypt are a mixture of Moors, Turks, Jews, Greeks, and Copties; which last I understand to be the race of the ancient Egyptians.

The chief commodities in this country are rice, flax, most sorts of grain, sugar, linen, and hides in abundance (especially

<sup>1</sup> Literally 'water-drawer bird' (Arabic *sagqā* and Turkish *qūsh*), i.e. a pelican.

<sup>2</sup> A species of plover (*Eudromas morinellus*).

of buffleas [buffaloes]), balsams, etc. As for their fruits, they have but little, if any, tree-fruits, as apples, pears, cherries, etc. but abundance of other sorts, such as melons, water-melons, cucumbers, etc.

Here is also great plenty of East India commodities, as silks, muslins, callicoes, spices, coffee, etc. And also of milk, butter, cheese, oil, olives, etc.

The habits of the Moors and Egyptians or Copties (Copticks) differ only in their turbants; the Moors' turbants being all white and the Copties' white striped with blue. They speak all one language; and generally wear a long black loose frock, sown together all down before. The Jews wear a frock of the same fashion, but of broad-cloth; but their caps are of an odd figure, being somewhat like the poll of a man's hat case, covered with broadcloth. And as for the Jewish women, they wear a long sort of head-dress, which is like one of our women's high-crown'd hats, but not quite so taper at the top, yet of a greater length, jutting out behind at the poll; in which they look very awkward indeed. The Greeks differ but little from the Turks in their habit, except it be in their turbants and caps. But they dare not wear anything of a green colour, tho' it be ever so small; if they did, they would be in danger of having their clothes torn off their backs (at least, that part which is green), and 'tis well if they escape the bastinadoes. And though all Mussulmans, whether Turks or Moors, have liberty to wear green, yet none will presume to wear a turbant of that colour, unless they belong to the race of Mahomet (who are always most respected).

There is in no part of the world, I am apt to think, greater encouragement given to whoredom than in Egypt. It is impossible for me to give you a full account of their licentiousness of this kind, and which is tolerated too; but yet I cannot forbear speaking somewhat of it, hoping it may be a motive to cause my countrymen to make a good use of it, and to bless God that we have such punishment by the laws to be inflicted, in order to the suppression of this soul-destroying sin. In Egypt, then, they have distinct streets and places which are all full of lewd houses; into any of which none of repute will enter but upon absolutely necessary occasions. The whores use to sit at the door, or walk in the streets unveil'd. They are commonly very rich in their

clothes; some having their shifts and drawers of silk, with silk coats like men's (as for petticoats, they never wear any in this country), and a silk sash about their middle (as indeed all others in these parts have—men, women, and children), with a knife tuck'd in at their girdle, the sheath of which is commonly silver. These courtezans (or ladies of pleasure), as well as other women, have broad velvet caps on their heads, beautified with abundance of pearls and other costly and gaudy ornaments. And they wear their hair in tresses behind, reaching down to their very heels, with little bells, or some such things, at the end, which swing against their heels and make a tinkling sound as they go. They also wear nose-jewels, and therefore 'tis not altogether improbable that these, or some like them, were the vanities of bewitching apparel which the prophet exclaims against (*Isaiah*, iii. 16). These madams go along the streets, smoaking their pipes of four or five feet long; and when they sit at their doors, a man can scarce pass by but they will endeavour to decoy him in. I have often wonder'd how these creatures can maintain themselves at the rate they do, seeing (I am told) that for three or four *parrahs*<sup>1</sup> (i.e. pence) any man may gratify his lust upon them. But they are so cunning that they will not encourage any to stay longer with them than in the fact and payment for it; because they will be ready for a fresh gallant.

And now to speak something more of Grand Cairo, a place eminent in history. In this place they have wells in most of their mosques, into which water is by an aqueduct convey'd at the time of the overflowing of Nilus; and there are men appointed, who stand at the windows of several of their churches to give cups of water to all such as pass by. If I mistake not, it is reported that in this city there are five or six thousand publick and private mosques;<sup>2</sup> among which some are very large and

<sup>1</sup> A small silver coin (Turkish *parah*), equivalent to one-fortieth of a piastre

<sup>2</sup> 'Not six thousand publick mosques and twenty thousand particular ones, as I find in the worthy Mr Collier's great dictionary from his author. I am positive it cannot be near the number. Nor three and twenty thousand, as Mons De Thevenot hath it (part 1, p. 129), though I honour that author, for he is as exact in the Turkish history as any that ever I yet saw. I speak of what I know and have seen' [*Author's note*] Thevenot's statement will be found in the second volume (p. 407) of the 1727 edition

stately, with curiously wrought fronts and gates, as likewise high round minarets or steeples. And some of the said minarets have several balconies round them, some two, some three; which balconies, and also the streets, during the time of *Ramadan*,<sup>1</sup> are illuminated with abundance of lamps, glorious to behold.

Many miles before we come to Cairo the two pyramids, which are six or seven miles beyond it, discover themselves. They are of a prodigious height, and in the form of a sugar-loaf.<sup>2</sup>

There is a town joining to the river Nile, about a mile and a half before we come to Cairo, call'd Bolock, where resort many hundreds of barks, laden with corn etc. Here we hired asses or camels, to carry our things to Cairo, where, notwithstanding the resort of strangers and merchants and all the fame that this city hath in history, all the entertainment for strangers is a naked room or chamber without the least furniture, and yet, though the accommodations are so mean, every stranger, whether pilgrim or merchant, when he takes a room, is obliged to pay fifty *para*hs for entrance and one *para*h a week afterwards, stay as long as he will.

In this city are said to be spoken no less than seventy-two languages.

As for the buildings here, they are but very ordinary and for the most part low, except some *hawns*,<sup>3</sup> i.e. publick houses of entertainment, which are three stories high. These are built after the same figure with their other houses, viz. four-square, with a court in the middle, and some of them are so large that they have three or four score rooms in them. There are several hundreds of these *hawns* in this city which have in the midst of their several courts little mosques built, for those who live or lodge there to perform *acsham* and *gega nomas*<sup>4</sup> (or evening and night prayers) in, because it is dangerous walking the streets after candle-lighting. When this is done, the gate of the *hawn* is shut. Now, considering these and the great houses with

<sup>1</sup> *Ramazan*, the ninth month, observed as a time of fasting.

<sup>2</sup> Evidently this distant glimpse was the only view Pitts obtained of these famous monuments.

<sup>3</sup> *Khans* (i.e. inns).

<sup>4</sup> A combination of the Turkish *āqshām* and *gege* with the Persian *namāz*.



large courts that every man of note hath, you must needs think it to be a very fair and magnificent city to take a distant prospect of. But yet the streets are very narrow, which (it being exceeding populous) is an inconvenience; for people frequently are very much throng'd<sup>1</sup> as they pass the streets, and sometimes lose their slippers off their feet.

The people here usually ride on asses, if they go but a mile or two in the city, and call for an ass as they do for a coach in London; and the women ride astride as men do. These asses pace as fast as any horse, and for one *parrah* (or penny) you may ride a mile. The owner of the ass drives it; and the drivers, as they go, are bound to call out to persons on the way, lest any hurt be done by sudden meeting or turning. So that all day long is heard a great noise, caus'd by the ass drivers, who are continually crying either *wuggick*, or *thorick*, or *shemalick*, or *yeame-jenick*,<sup>2</sup> i.e. have a care of your face, or back, or left side, or right side.

Twice a day they generally water their streets, because of the excessive heat. And there are many that get a livelihood by carrying of water in goat-skins, with two or three brass cups, in which they offer water to drink to those that pass by; for which some give them to the value of half a farthing.

As for the plenty which abounds here, 'tis wonderful. You may have twenty, nay, five and twenty, eggs for one *parrah*. And you may also have fourteen or sixteen little cakes of bread (each of which is very near as big as an halfpenny loaf with us) for one *parrah*; and all other things are proportionably cheap.

The water which they have in this city is very brackish, and therefore most of what they make use of is brought on camels from the river Nile, and many hundreds get their living by bringing it. This water hath such a quality in it that it usually purges strangers at first.

Here is great scarcity of wood; so that they heat their ovens commonly with horse or cow dung or dirt of the streets. What wood they have is brought from parts adjoining to the

<sup>1</sup> Pushed or jostled—a sense now obsolete.

<sup>2</sup> Egyptian-Arabic *waghak*, *ḡahrak*, *shimālak*, *yamīnak*, with the meanings indicated.

Black Sea,<sup>1</sup> and is sold by weight, as sea-coal is with us by measure.

There are daily brought into this city large herds of goats; and if any are minded to buy of their milk, they milk it for them before their faces, that they may be satisfied it is good and new. Indeed, most of common necessities are brought about to their doors to be sold, except it be flesh.

They have a very pretty way of hatching chickens hereabouts.<sup>2</sup> It's possible some may think what I am going to tell a fable; but I declare I have seen it and aver it to be true, viz. they have a place underground, not unlike an oven, the bottom of which is spread all over with straw, on which they lay some thousands of eggs, close one by the other; which, without the warmth of the hens or any other prolifick heat but that of the sun, dung and such ignite particles as the earth may afford, are brought to life. When the chickens are thus hatch'd, they sell them to poor people by the measure; and when they are full grown up and fat, the value of them is no more than two or three *parrahs* apiece. When I was sailing up the Nile, I had the curiosity sometimes to go ashore and walk, when the wind was contrary; for at such times they ha[ul]led the vessel along with a rope. When I was once walking on the bank I was shown a place where chickens were thus hatched.

In this city there is a particular place where a market is held twice a week for the selling of Christian slaves, which are brought by merchants from Turkey, and were taken mostly by the Tartars. They are for the most part only women and children; for the men slaves are generally kept in Turkey for the service of the gallees. These slaves brought here to be sold are most of them Muscovites and Russians and from those parts, and some of the Emperor of Germany's country. They are curiously deck'd and set out with fine clothes when they are expos'd to sale, that they may carry the better price. The boys, whose heads are shaved, when they stand in the market have a lock of hair, one part under their caps, the other hanging down their

<sup>1</sup> From the earliest times timber figured largely among Egyptian imports, but it came mostly from Syria and Lebanon. See the *Geographical Journal*, vol. CVII, p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> The incubation of chickens has been described by many travellers.

cheeks, to signify they are newly taken and are yet Christians. And altho' the women and maidens are veil'd, yet the chapmen have liberty to view their faces and to put their fingers into their mouths to feel their teeth, and also to feel their breasts. Nay, further, as I have been inform'd, they are sometimes permitted by the sellers in a modest way to be search'd whether they are virgins or no.

It hath been affirm'd by some that the slaves which are sold in this country are never compell'd to turn to the Mahometan religion. In Algier, I confess, it is not common (though I myself suffer'd enough from them, God knows); but in Egypt and Turkey, I affirm, it is otherwise.

The younger sort which are sold for slaves are immediately put to school to learn to read; for they are very poor ignorant creatures. And indeed, after they have turn'd they fare very well in those parts, almost as well as their patroons' children, if they are any way ingenious. They say that these *renegadoes* have a greater blessing than the natural Turks, for they commonly become great men and bear sway. And it is observ'd by them that the children of those Turks which marry here in Egypt seldom live to men's estate; but that the offspring of these *renegadoes* live as long as the natives do, and that they have a blessing on the account of Joseph's being sold into Egypt.

Here are no Turks, you must know, but what come from Turkey, and they are all *jeanesherras* or *janizaries*,<sup>1</sup> i.e. soldiers.

The people of this country, and particularly of Cairo, are very rugged and much given to passion. They'll scold like whores, but seldom care to fight; and when they do, they strike with the palm of their hand and not with the fist. They are extremely addicted to cozening and cheating, especially of strangers, who are not well acquainted with their coin and their manner of buying and selling. When the buyer gives a *parrah* into the seller's hand, the latter, if it be possible, puts it into his mouth and makes it quiver between his lips with his breath, and then cunningly takes another (not so good) which he had in his mouth for the purpose, and gives it to the buyer, telling him it is *mokseus* [Arabic *maqṣūṣ*], i.e. clipt. After I was

<sup>1</sup> Infantry (Turkish *yemtsleri*).

acquainted with this cheat I would suffer none to mouth my *parrahs*.

They are also very abusive to strangers, insomuch that it is dangerous for such to be in the streets after candle-lighting. Nay, I have known them to fall on a stranger at midday, and rob him and beat him to that degree that it hath cost him his life. An ancient man, a neighbour of ours at Algier, who put up at the same *hawn* with us, was so abused by villains, as he was walking in some bye-lane, that he was never well after, but died in a few weeks.

But though they love cheating of strangers so well, yet they are strict in punishing a false balance; and therefore the bakers' bread is examined into and, if it prove less than the just and legal weight, they take it away and give it to the poor, and punish the offending baker with many hard blows on the bare feet; which I saw several times. For fear of this, many times such as know their bread to be less than the standard weight run away and leave it to be seiz'd on, thereby to avoid corporal punishment.

There are abundance of buffleas in this country; which are somewhat bigger than our oxen, all black, but not quite so hairy. They hold their noses much forward, with their horns pointing backward. The people use them for the same purposes as oxen are used with us.

I need not tell you of the abundance of rice here, for this is known to be the chief country for that commodity in the whole world. But notwithstanding the great plenty which this country abounds with, in all my life I never saw the like multitude of beggars as here. For 'tis a common thing to see ten, twelve, or more of them in a company together, and especially Thursday evening, which is the evening before their Sabbath; at which time, if there be any charity going, it is shewn.

People in this country are much afflicted with sore eyes and swoll'n legs; and such as are porters have some other parts also commonly very much swoll'n, by bearing of extraordinary heavy burdens. They are generally very strong men, and will carry three hundredweight or more on their backs at once. Nay, if I mistake not, none are admitted into their company unless they can carry five hundredweight such a length.

They have a saying that God hath such a love for this city that he casts his eyes upon it seven times a day, to behold it with complacency.

Most of the gentry of this country keep eunuchs, or gelt negroes, in their houses, with whom they intrust their wives, and wheresoever they go, be it to the bathing-houses or else where, these eunuchs go with them and make way for them with a long staff in their hands. Their masters, indeed, intrust them with all, in a manner, and have a great esteem for them, inso-much that they call them 'masters'. The reason, no doubt, is because they would engage them to be faithful in the trust of their wives. These eunuchs cost a considerable price, because they are young when they are castrated, and several die to one that lives. They usually grow to a great stature, have an effeminate voice, and never have any hair grow on their faces.

There is a well<sup>1</sup> in this city of Cairo, of a very considerable depth and about twenty foot square. There is a way to go down halfway, dug round about it, to which light is given from the top of the well, through great holes dug in the sides of it. If I mistake not, there are about three hundred broad steps down to the halfway, where there is a stable, in which oxen are kept to draw the water from the bottom, and there is a great cistern, into which the water is emptied, from whence it is drawn by other oxen, after the same manner, to the top. The way of drawing it up is thus, viz. they have a wheel, somewhat like a mill-wheel, on which are two ropes; and between these are fastned little earthen pots to both of the ropes, about four foot distance one from the other. As the ox goes round, so the wheel goes round and bungs the pots up full, which empty themselves into the cistern, and so go down empty, with their mouths downward, to take in more water. This contrivance is for their baths and watering of gardens etc. But it is not so much for the sake of this machine that I mention this well as for another reason, viz. because this is affirm'd by them to be the well in which Joseph was kept a prisoner by Potiphar.

But I am afraid I have held the reader too long in suspense

<sup>1</sup> The so called Well of Joseph, still to be seen in the citadel. It was constructed by Saladin, and the tradition that Joseph was cast into it by his brethien is, of course, absurd, as is also the reference in the text to Potiphar

before we come to Mecca. I shall beg his patience but a little longer.

From Cairo we proceeded on our journey towards Mecca; and at the bottom or utmost bounds of the Red Sea we came to a town call'd Sues (or Suez), which is about a day's journey from Cairo, and hath a port where do anchor the ships that use the Mecca voyage. They are an odd sort of vessels, having no decks, and are deeply laden, altogether with provisions for Mecca; for when we had intelligence at Cairo that they were ready, we all furnish'd ourselves with three or four months' provisions, enough to serve us back again to Egypt, and then hired camels for Sues.

In this town we paid a groat or sixpence a gallon for fresh water. Here I saw a great number of large very good brass guns under covert, near the sea, laid one upon another; but forgot to enquire how they were brought there and what they were designed for.

'Tis but a few miles after we come out of Egypt before we enter into the wilderness.

After we had sail'd about two or three days from Sues we anchored at Toor (or Tor or Eltor), a very small town and port, where we refresh'd ourselves with water; for every passenger carries his own water. We had also here plenty of apricocks and other fruit, which were brought from Mount Sinai, which is call'd by them Toor Dog, i.e. Law Mountain,<sup>1</sup> because the moral law was there given. This mountain, I take it, is about five or six miles from the seaside. The Papists [*should be* 'Greeks'], I was told, have a monastery on it, for which they pay dear to the Turks. Many Papists make visits there.

After we had sail'd a little further we were shew'd the place where (they say) the Children of Israel pass'd through the Red Sea; which they term by the name of Kilt-el-Pharown,<sup>2</sup> i.e. The Well or Pit of Pharaoh, meaning where he and all his host were drowned in their pursuit after the Israelites. They report that in this place is much danger without a fresh gale of wind, because it is a kind of vortex, the water running whirling round and is apt to swallow down a ship.

<sup>1</sup> Tūr is the Arabic name for Mt. Sinai, and *dagh* is Turkish for 'mountain'.

<sup>2</sup> Arabic *qalt* (a hollow) and *Fir'aun* (Pharaoh).

I guess that the breadth of the Red Sea in this place where the Israelites are said to have passed through is about six or seven leagues.

There is no safe sailing in this sea by night, unless it be in one place of about two nights' sail, because of the multitude of rocks (tho' I don't observe that the maps describe them); which are so thick that we were always in sight of some or other of them; sometimes in the midst of a great many of them, and frequently so near as to be able to throw a stone to them. Some of these rocks are much bigger than others; some look like little islands, others just appear above water, and some are to be seen a little under water. So that every evening we came to an anchor to the leeward of one rock or other.

Their sailors are prisoners of their own, and I think are used as bad as (if not worse than) any galley slaves in the world.

At the hithermost bounds of the Red Sea, i.e. at Sues (where we took shipping) it's but of a little breadth. For the space of four or five days' sail from Tor we keep near the side of the wilderness, on the left hand; and after that we lose sight of the shore on the right hand.

The water of the Red Sea is generally thought to be much saltier hereabout than in other parts, insomuch that when they took *abdes* [see p. 23] with it (for none did otherwise, because of the scarcity of fresh water) it made their posteriors exceedingly to smart.

We were on this sea about a month. After we had sail'd from Sues about twenty days, we came to a place where was buried ashore a *marabbot* [Arabic *murabit*], i.e. a saint or one reputed eminently devout and religious; and perhaps some hundreds of years are pass'd since he was there inter'd. When we came here one of the ship's crew, with the consent of the rest, made a little ship, about two foot in length, and went to every one of the *hagges* or pilgrims (for you must observe that, if any die on the journey before they come to Mecca, they are notwithstanding ever after termed by the honourable name of *hagge*), desiring them to bestow their charity in honour of the said *marabbot*; and at such a time they liberally bestow some piece of money to the said end. They then took some small wax candles, with a little bottle of oil, and put them into the ship, together with the

money they had received of well-inclin'd people (as they said, but I am apt to think they put in but a very small part of it, if any at all, but kept it to themselves). This being done, they all held up their hands, begging the *marabbot's* blessing and praying that they might have a good voyage. And then they put the ship overboard into the sea; not in the least doubting of its safe arrival to the *marabbot*, for the benefit of his sepulchre, tho' it be a desolate place and not at all inhabited where he is said to lie inter'd. Poor ignorant creatures! This *marabbot*, they have a tradition, died in his voyage towards Mecca, and therefore his memory is most highly esteemed and venerated by them. The veneration they have for these *marabbots* is so great that, if any person who hath committed murder flies to one of the little houses which (as I inform'd you<sup>1</sup>) are built upon their sepulchres for sanctuary, he is as safe as if he were in a convent; for none durst touch him in order to fetch him thence.

A few days after this we came to a place called Rabbock,<sup>2</sup> about four days' sail on this side [of] Mecca; where all the *hagges* (excepting those of the female sex) do enter into *hirraven* or *ihram*,<sup>3</sup> i.e. they take off all their clothes, covering themselves with two *hirravens* or large white cotton wrappers. One they put about their middle, which reaches down to their ancles; the other they cover the upper part of the body with, except the head. And they wear no other thing on their bodies but these wrappers; only a pair of *gimgameea*,<sup>4</sup> i.e. thin-soled shoes (like sandals), the over-leather of which covers only the toes, their insteps being all naked. In this manner, like humble penitents, they go from Rabbock till they come to Mecca to approach the temple; many times enduring the scorching heat of

<sup>1</sup> Earlier he had written 'these *marabbots* have generally a little neat room built over their graves, resembling in figure their mosques or churches, which is very nicely cleansed and well look'd after. There are several of them about Algier, to which the women on Fridays flock to pay their visits and perform their *salah* or prayer, begging of the *marabbot* to hear and answer their petitions. Many people there are who will scarce pass by any of them without lifting up their hands and saying some short prayer'

<sup>2</sup> Rabegh, a small seaport about half-way between Yenbo and Jidda, and 124 miles north-west of Mecca.

<sup>3</sup> *Ihrām*, the special costume worn by the pilgrims while at Mecca. An illustration of it forms the frontispiece of Burton's second volume.

<sup>4</sup> Arabic *janyamiya*, a diminutive of *janyam*, a slipper



the sun till their very skin is burnt off their backs and arms and their heads swoll'n to a very great degree. Yet when any man's health is by such austerities in danger and like to be impair'd, they may lawfully put on their clothes, on condition still that, when they come to Mecca, they sacrifice a sheep and give it to the poor. During the time of their wearing this mortifying habit, which is about the space of seven days, it is held unlawful for them so much as to cut their nails or to kill a louse or a flea, tho' they see them sucking their blood; but yet, if they are so troublesome that they cannot well endure it longer, 'tis lawful for them to remove them from one place of the body to another.

During this time they are very watchful over their tempers, keep a jealous eye upon their passions, and observe a strict government of their tongues, making continual use of a form of devout expressions. And they will also be careful to be reconcil'd and at peace with all such as they had any difference with; accounting it a very sinful and shameful thing to bear the least malice against any. They do not shave themselves during this time.

Next we come to Gidda [Jidda], the nearest seaport to Mecca, not quite one day's journey from it,<sup>1</sup> where the ships are unloaded. Here we are met by *dilleels*,<sup>2</sup> i.e. certain persons who come from Mecca on purpose to instruct the *hagges* or pilgrims in the ceremonies (most of them being ignorant of them) which are to be used in their worship at the temple there, in the middle of which is a place which they call *Beat Allah*, i.e. the House of God.<sup>3</sup> They say that Abraham built it; to which I give no credit.

As soon as we come to the town of Mecca the *dilleel* or guide carries us into the great street, which is in the midst of the town and to which the temple joins.<sup>4</sup> After the camels are laid down, he first directs us to the fountains, there to take

<sup>1</sup> 'He must have been accustomed to long days' journeys. Al-Idrisi makes Jeddah forty miles from Meccah. I calculated about forty-four' (Burton)

<sup>2</sup> '*Dalil*, a guide, generally called at Meccah *Muttawwif*' (Burton).

<sup>3</sup> More generally known as the *Ka'ba*; alleged to have been built by Abraham, under divine inspiration, to represent God's own dwelling in heaven

<sup>4</sup> 'Note that before they'll provide for themselves they serve God in their way.' [Author's note.]

*abdes*;<sup>1</sup> which being done, he brings us to the temple, into which (having left our shoes with one who constantly attends to receive them) we enter at the door called *Bab-el-salem* [*Bāb-ul-Salām*], i.e. the Welcome Gate or Gate of Peace. After a few paces entrance the *dilleel* makes a stand and holds up his hands towards the *Beat Allah* (it being in the middle of the mosque); the *hagges* imitating him and saying after him the same words which he speaks. At the very first sight of the *Beat Allah* the *hagges* melt into tears. Then we are led up to it, still speaking after the *dilleel*; then we are led round it seven times, and then make two *erkaets*.<sup>2</sup> This being done, we are led out into the street again; where we are sometimes to run and sometimes to walk very quick with the *dilleel* from one place of the street to the other, about a bow-shot.<sup>3</sup> And I profess I could not chuse but admire to see those poor creatures so extraordinarily devout and affectionate when they were about these superstitions, and with what awe and trembling they were possess'd; insomuch that I could scarce forbear shedding of tears to see their zeal, tho' blind and idolatrous. After all this is done, we return'd to the place in the street where we left our camels, with our provision and necessaries, and then look out for lodgings; where when we come, we disrobe and take off our *hirrawems* and put on our ordinary clothes again.

All the pilgrims hold it to be their great duty well to improve their time whilst they are at Mecca, not only to do their accustomed duty and devotion in the temple but to spend all their leisure time there and (as far as strength will permit) to continue at *townoaf*,<sup>4</sup> i.e. to walk round the *Beat Allah*, which is about four and twenty paces square. At one corner of the *Beat* there is a black stone fastned, and fram'd in with silver plate,<sup>5</sup> and every time they come to that corner they kiss the stone; and having gone round seven times, they perform two *erkaets*-

<sup>1</sup> '*Abdest* is the Turkish word, borrowed from the Persian, for *Wuzu*, the minor ablution' (Burton).

<sup>2</sup> '*Ruka'at*, a bending This two-bow prayer is in honour of the Mosque' (Burton)

<sup>3</sup> 'This is the ceremony technically called *Al-Sal*, or running between Safa and Marwah. Burckhardt describes it accurately (vol. i, pp 174-5)' (Burton). See also Philby (p 42).

<sup>4</sup> Arabic *tawaf*. It is described by Burton (vol. ii, p. 165).

<sup>5</sup> 'Now gold or gilt' (Burton).

*nomas* or prayers. This stone, they say, was formerly white, and then it was called *haggar essaed*, i.e. the white stone; but by reason of the sins of the multitudes of people who kiss it, it is become black and is now called *haggar esswaed*, or the black stone.<sup>1</sup>

This place is so much frequented by people going round it that the place of *towoaf*, i.e. the circuit which they take in going round it, is seldom void of people at any time of the day or night. Many have waited several weeks, nay, months, for the opportunity of finding it so; for they say that, if any person is blest with such an opportunity, that, for his or her zeal in keeping up the honour of *towoaf*, let him petition what they will at the *Beat Allah*, they shall be answered. Many will walk round it till they are quite weary, then rest, and at it again; carefully remembring at the end of every seventh time to perform two *erkaets*. This *Beat* is in effect the object of their devotion, the idol which they adore; for, let them be never so far distant from it, east, west, north or south of it, they'll be sure to bow down towards it. But when they are at the *Beat*, they may go on which side they please and pay their *sallah* [see p. 21 n.] towards it. Sometimes there are several hundreds at *towoaf* at once, especially after *acsham nomas*, or fourth time of service, which is after candle-lighting (as you heard before), and these both men and women; but the women walk on the outside the men and the men nearest to the *Beat*. In so great a resort as this, it is not to be suppos'd that every individual person can come to kiss the stone aforementioned; therefore, in such a case, the lifting up of the hands towards it, smoothing down their faces, and using a short expression of devotion, as *Allah-waick barick*, i.e. 'blessed God',<sup>2</sup> or *Allah cabor* [*Allah akbar*], i.e. 'great God', or some suchlike, and so passing by it till opportunity of kissing it offers, is thought sufficient. But when there are but few men at *towoaf*, then the women get opportunity to kiss the said stone; and when they have gotten it, they close in with it as they come round and walk round as quick as they can to come

<sup>1</sup> 'This is an error. The stone is called *Hajar Aswad*, the Black Stone, or *Hajar As'ad*, the Blessed Stone. Moreover, it did not change its colour on account of the sins of the people who kissed it' (Burton). For an account of it (with an illustration) see *ibid*, vol. II, pp. 300-2.

<sup>2</sup> This appears to be *Allah tabarak*, 'God, blessed be He'.

to it again, and so keep possession of it for a considerable time. The men, when they see that the women have got the place, will be so civil as to pass by and give them leave to take their fill (as I may say) in their *tonoaf* or walking round, during which they are using some formal expressions. When the women are at the stone, then it's esteem'd a very rude and abominable thing to go near them, respecting the time and place.

I shall now give you a more particular description of Mecca and the temple there.

First, as to Mecca. It is a town situated in a barren place (about one day's journey from the Red Sea) in a valley, or rather in the midst of many little hills. 'Tis a place of no force, wanting both walls and gates. Its buildings are (as I said before) very ordinary, insomuch that it would be a place of no tolerable entertainment, were it not for the anniversary resort of so many thousand *haggas* or pilgrims, on whose coming the whole dependance of the town (in a manner) is; for many shops are scarcely open all the year besides.

The people here, I observ'd, are a poor sort of people, very thin, lean, and swarthy. The town is surrounded for several miles with many thousands of little hills, which are very near one to the other. I have been on the top of some of them near Mecca, where I could see some miles about, but yet was not able to see the farthest of the hills. They are all stony rock, and blackish and pretty near of a bigness, appearing at a distance like cocks of hay, but all pointing towards Mecca. Some of them are half a mile in circumference etc., but all near of one height. The people here have an odd and foolish sort of tradition concerning them, viz. that when Abraham went about building the *Beat Allah*, God by his wonderful providence did so order it that every mountain in the world should contribute something to the building thereof, and accordingly every one did send its proportion; though there is a mountain near Algier which is called *Corra Dog* [Turkish *Qara Dag*], i.e. black mountain, and the reason of its blackness they say is because it did not send any part of itself towards building the temple at Mecca. Between these hills is good and plain travelling, though they stand near one to another.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'These are mere local traditions. The original *Ka'abah* was composed of

There is upon the top of one of them<sup>1</sup> a cave, which they term *hira* [Arabic *khira*], i.e. blessing; into which (they say) Mahomet did usually retire for his solitary devotion, meditations, and fastings. And here, they believe, he had a great part of the *alcoran* brought him by the angel Gabriel. I have been in this cave, and observ'd that it is not at all beautified; at which I admir'd [i.e. wondered].<sup>2</sup>

About half a mile out of Mecca is a very steep hill, and there are stairs made to go to the top of it, where is a *cupola*, under which is a cloven rock. Into this, they say, Mahomet, when very young, viz. about four years of age, was carried by the angel Gabriel, who open'd his breast and took out his heart, from which he pick'd some black blood specks, which was his original corruption; then put it into its place again and afterward clos'd up the part; and that during this operation Mahomet felt no pain. Into this very place I myself went, because the rest of my company did so; and performed some *erkaets*, as they did.

The town hath plenty of water and yet but few herbs, unless in some particular places. Here are several sorts of good fruits to be had, viz. grapes, melons, water-melons, cucumbers, pumkins, and the like; but these are brought two or three days' journey off, where there is a place of very great plenty, call'd (if I mistake not) Habbash.<sup>3</sup> Likewise sheep are brought hither and sold. So that, as to Mecca itself, it affords little or nothing of comfortable provisions. It lieth in a very hot country; insomuch that people run from one side of the streets to the other, to get into the shadow, as the motion of the sun causes it. The inhabitants, especially men, do usually sleep on

materials gathered from the six mountains of Paradise. The present building is of grey granite, quarried in a hill near Meccah' (Burton).

<sup>1</sup> 'Now Jabal Nur' (Burton)

<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere in his book (p. 83) Pitts observes: 'It was in this month of *Ramadan*, they say, that the angel Gabriel dictated to Mahomet the *alcoran* (that is, that chapter of it which he first published) in the cave which is by the town of Mecca, on the top of a little hill. While I was at Mecca I went thither; and tho' it was merely to satisfy my curiosity, yet it was thought very commendable in me. But I could find nothing remarkable in this so famous cave. From the hill you have a good prospect of the town and of the *kabea* (*caba*) or temple of Mecca.'

<sup>3</sup> 'They come from the well-known Taif, which the country people call Hijaz, but never Habbash' (Burton).

the tops of the houses for the air, or in the streets before their doors. Some lay the small bedding they have on a thin mat on the ground; others have a slight frame, made much like drink-stalls on which we place barrels, standing on four legs, corded with palm cordage, on which they put their bedding. Before they bring out their bedding they sweep the streets and water them. As for my own part, I usually lay open without any bed covering, on the top of the house. Only I took a linen cloth, dipt in water, and after I had wrung it, cover'd myself with it in the night; and when I awoke, I should find it dry. Then I would wet it again; and thus I did two or three times in a night.

Secondly, I shall next give you some account of the temple of Mecca. It hath about forty-two doors to enter into it; not so much, I think, for necessity as figure, for in some places they are close by one another. The form of it much resembling that of the Royal Exchange in London, but I believe it's near ten times bigger. 'Tis all open, and gravell'd in the mudst, except some paths that come from certain doors, which lead to the *Beat Allah* and are pav'd with broad stones. The walks or cloisters all round are arch'd overhead and pav'd beneath with fine broad stone; and all round are little rooms or cells, where such dwell as give themselves up to reading, studying, and a devout life, who are much akin to their dervises [Arabic *darwish*] or hermits. The dervises are most commonly such as live an eremetick [hermit] life, travelling up and down the country, like mendicants, living on the charity of others; wearing a white woollen garment and a long white woollen cap (much like some of the orders of friers in the Romish Church), with a sheep or goat's skin on their back to lie on and a long staff in their hand. When they read, they commonly sit down, putting their legs across and keeping their knees above the ground. They usually carry their beads about their arms or necks; whereas others carry them in their pockets. Many Turks, when they reform, give themselves up to a dervise sort of life. And for an instance, my second patroon had a younger brother, who had liv'd a very debauch'd life; but on a sudden a great change seem'd to be wrought upon him, insomuch that he let his beard grow, never shaving it, and put on his great green turban (which none presume to wear but such as are of the blood and

race of Mahomet) and betook himself to the learning his *Elif*, *Be*, *Te*, i.e. A, B, C.<sup>1</sup> In a little time he attain'd to read very well, and spent a great part of his time in reading. Some of his old jolly companions would laugh at him for it; but he still kept on in this strict way of living, notwithstanding all their banters.

The *Beat Allah*, which stands in the middle of the temple, is four-square, about twenty-four paces each square and near twenty-four foot<sup>2</sup> in height. 'Tis built with great stone, all smooth and plain, without the least bit of carv'd work on it. 'Tis covered all over, from top to bottom, with a thick sort of silk. Above the middle part of the covering are imbroidered all round letters of gold, the meaning of which I cannot well call to mind, but I think they were some devout expressions. Each letter is near two foot in length and two inches broad. Near the lower end of this *Beat* are large brass rings fastned into it, through which passeth a great cotton rope, and to this the lower end of the covering is tack'd. The threshold of the door that belongs to the *Beat* is as high as a man can reach; and therefore, when any person enters into it, a sort of ladder-stairs are brought for that purpose. The door is plated all over with silver, and there's a covering hangs over it and reaches to the ground, which is kept turn'd up all the week, except Thursday night and Friday, which is their Sabbath. The said covering of the door is very thick imbroider'd with gold, insomuch that it weighs several score pounds. The top of the *Beat* is flat, beaten with lime and sand, and there is a long gutter or spout, to carry off the water when it rains; at which time the people will run, throng, and struggle to get under the said gutter, that so the water that comes off the *Beat* may fall upon them; accounting it as the dew of heaven, and looking on it as a great happiness to have it drop upon them; but if they can recover some of this water to drink, they esteem it to be yet a much greater happiness. Many poor people make it their endeavour to get some of it and present it to the *hagges*; for which they are well rewarded.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Alif*, *bā*, *tā*, A B T

<sup>2</sup> "This is an error of printing for "paces" (Burton) Burckhardt gives the dimensions as '18 paces in length, 14 in breadth, and from 35 to 40 feet in height'

<sup>3</sup> In another part of his work (p 83) Pitts says 'When I was at Mecca, in the month of *Ramadan*, it happened one day to rain much, when my patroon's water-carrier, who daily supplied us with the holy water of *Beer elzemzem* [see p 33],

In Mecca there are thousands of blue pigeons,<sup>1</sup> which none will affright or abuse, much less kill them; and they are therefore so very tame that they'll pick meat out of one's hand. I myself have often fed them in the house where I resided while there. They come in great flocks to the temple, where they are usually fed by the *hagges*; for the poor people of Mecca come to them with a little sort of a dish made with rushes, with some corn in it, begging them to bestow something on *hammamet metta nabee*,<sup>2</sup> i.e. the pigeons of the Prophet. I have heard some say that in their flight they'll never fly over the *Beat Allah*, as if they knew it to be the house of God; but it is a very great mistake, for I have seen them oftentimes fly over it.

This *Beat Allah* is opened but two days in the space of six weeks, viz. one day for the men and the next day for the women.<sup>3</sup> As I was at Mecca about four months I had the opportunity of entering into it twice—a reputed advantage which many thousands of the *hagges* have not met with; for those that come by land make no longer stay at Mecca than sixteen or seventeen days.

When any enter into the *Beat*, all that they have to do is to perform two *erkaets* on each side, with the holding up the two hands and petitioning at the conclusion of each two *erkaets*. And they are so very reverent and devout in doing this that they will not suffer their eyes to wander and gaze about, for they account it very sinful so to do. Nay, they say that one was smitten blind for gazing about when in the *Beat*, as the reward of his vain and unlawful curiosity. I could not, for my part, give any credit to this story, but look'd on it as a legendary relation, and therefore was resolved, if I could, to take my view of it. I mean not to continue gazing about it, but now and then to cast an observing eye. And I profess I found nothing worth seeing in it; only two<sup>4</sup> wooden pillars in the midst to keep up

brought some of the rainy water which fell from the *Beat Allah* to my patroon, as a valuable present, for which he was well rewarded.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Varthema (p. 45) calls them doves and says they were reported to be 'of the stock of that dove which spoke to Mahomet in the form of the Holy Spirit'.

<sup>2</sup> *Hamāmāt matā' al-Nabī* (Syriac dialect).

<sup>3</sup> 'This is no longer the case. Few women ever enter the *Ka'abah*, on account of the personal danger they run there' (Burton).

<sup>4</sup> 'There are now three' (Burton).



the roof, and a bar of iron fastened to them, on which hang'd three or four silver lamps, which are, I suppose, seldom (if ever) lighted. The floor of the *Beat* is marble, and so is the inside of the walls, on which there is written something in Arabick, which I had not time to read. The walls, tho' of marble on the inside, are hung all over with silk, which is pull'd off<sup>1</sup> before the *hagges* enter. Those that go into the *Beat* tarry there but a very little while, viz. scarce so much as half a quarter of an hour, because others wait for the same privilege; and while some go in, others are going out. After all is over and all that will have done this, the Sultan of Mecca, who is a *shirreef*, i.e. one of the race of Mahomet,<sup>2</sup> accounts himself not too good to cleanse the *Beat*, and therefore, with some of his favourites, doth wash and cleanse it. And first of all they wash it with the holy water, *zam zam*, and after that with sweet water. The stairs which were brought to enter in at the door of the *Beat* being remov'd, the people crowd under the door to receive on them the sweeping of the said water. And the besoms wherewith the *Beat* is cleansed are broken in pieces and thrown out amongst the mob; and he that gets a small stick or twig of it keeps it as a sacred relique.

Every year the covering of this *Beat Allah* is renewed in Grand Cairo, by the order of the Grand Seignior;<sup>3</sup> and when the caravan goes with the *hagges* to Mecca, then is the new covering carried upon two camels, which do no other work all the year long. It is sent out of Egypt with a great deal of re-joycing, and received into Mecca with wonderful joy; many people even weeping for joy, and some kissing the very camels that carry it, bidding them welcome again and again, reaching their hands up to the covering and then smoothing down their faces. This and a great deal more they do, to show what a veneration they have for this new covering, tho' not yet put on about the *Beat*. Well may you think then what esteem they have for the *Beat Allah* itself.

<sup>1</sup> 'It is tucked up about six feet high' (Burton)

<sup>2</sup> 'In Arabia the Sharif is the descendant of Hasan [the Prophet's grandson], through his two sons, Zaid and Hasan al-Musanna' (Burton, vol 11, p 32.)

<sup>3</sup> Since the absorption of the Hijaz into the independent kingdom of Sa'udi Arabia, this practice has been discontinued. The acceptance of the covering (*kiswa*) was looked upon as an acknowledgement of Turkish suzerainty and was disliked accordingly.

When the old covering or *hirravem* or *irham* (for so the name of it is) is taken down, the new one is put up by the Sultan Shirreef of Mecca, with some to assist him. The old covering the Sultan takes into his own custody, for it properly belongs to him, and cuts it into pieces and sells them to the *hagges*, who care not (almost) how much they give for a piece of it. They being so eager after these shreds, a piece of the bigness of a sheet of paper will cost a *sultane*,<sup>1</sup> i.e. nine or ten shillings. Yea, the very cotton rope (to which the lower part of the covering was fastened) is also cut into pieces, untwisted, and sold. Many buy a piece of the covering of the *Beat* on purpose to have it laid on their breast when they are dead and be buried with them. This they carry always with them, esteeming it as an excellent amulet to preserve them from all manner of danger. I am apt to believe that the Sultan Shirreef makes as much money of the old covering as the new may cost; although they say that the work that is in it is alone the employment of many people for a whole year's space.

But to speak something further of the temple at Mecca; for I am willing to be very particular in matters about it, tho' in so being I should (it may be) speak of things which by some people may be thought trivial. The compass of ground round the *Beat* (where the people exercise themselves in the duty of *towoaf*) is paved with marble<sup>2</sup> about fifty foot in breadth; and round this marble pavement stand pillars of brass,<sup>3</sup> about fifteen foot high and twenty foot distant from each other; above the middle part of which iron bars are fastened, reaching from one to the other, and several lamps made of glass are hang'd to each of the said bars with brass wires in the form of a triangle, to give light in the night season. For they pay their devotions at the *Beat Allah* as much by night as by day during the *hagges'* stay at Mecca. These glasses are half filled with water and a third part with oil, on which a round wire of brass is buoy'd up with three little corks. In the midst of this wire is made a place to put in the wick or cotton, which burns till the

<sup>1</sup> More usually *sultanni*, a small Turkish gold coin.

<sup>2</sup> 'It is a close kind of grey granite, which takes a high polish from the pilgrims' feet' (Burton).

<sup>3</sup> 'Now iron posts' (Burton)

oil is spent. Every day they are washed clean and replenished with fresh water, oil, and cotton.

On each of the four squares of the *Beat* is a little room built, and over every one of them is a little chamber with windows all round it, in which chambers the *emaums*, together with the *mezzins*,<sup>1</sup> perform *sallah* in the audience of all the people which are below. These four chambers are built, one at each square of the *Beat*, by reason that there are four sorts of Mahometans. The first are called *Haniffee* [Hanafi]; most of them are Turks. The second, *Schafee*,<sup>2</sup> whose manners and ways the Arabians follow. The third, *Hanbelee* [Hanbali]; of which there are but few. The fourth *Malekee* [Maliki]; of which are those that live westward of Egypt, even to the Emperor of Morocco's country. These all agree in fundamentals; only there is some small difference between them in the ceremonial part. As for instance, the *Hanifees*, when they stand at their devotion, having touch'd the lower part of their ears with their two thumbs, place their hands on their bellies, the right hand on the left, intimating that they stand bound, in the presence of God, to live well. The *Malekees* and *Schafees* lift up their hands in a sort of careless manner and then let them fall down and hang by their sides; which intimates, as they say, a reverence of the divine majesty. As for the *Hanbelees*, they differ but little from the *Hanifees*. But of all these four sorts the *Hanifees* seem to be the most serious, devout, and deliberate in their worship, as well as in their preparatories. Every Mussulman is bound to believe in all Mahomet's apostles (as they call them), especially these four, viz. Abu-beker, Omar, Othman, and Ali,<sup>3</sup> who were the great and principal sticklers for the religion of Mahomet after his death. But the *Hanbelees* do not own Ali to be one of Mahomet's apostles; upon which account they are look'd on by the rest as heretical.

About twelve paces from the *Beat* is (as they say) the sepulchre<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *muezzin* cries the hours of prayer from the minaret. The *imām* conducts the services in the mosque.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Shafe'i school have not, and never had, a peculiar oratory like the other schools. They pray near the well Zemzem' (Burton).

<sup>3</sup> The Caliphs Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Usman, and 'Ali.

<sup>4</sup> This appears to refer to the '(praying) place' of Abraham (*Makām Ibrāhīm*), shown in Pitts's plan as c.

of Abraham, who by God's immediate command (they tell you) built this *Beat Allah*; which sepulchre is enclos'd within iron grates. 'Tis made somewhat like the tombstones which people of fashion have among us, but with a very handsome imbroider'd covering. Into this persons are very apt to gaze. A small distance from it, on the left hand, is a well which they call *Beer el Zem Zem*, the water whereof they call holy water and as superstitiously esteem it as the Papists do theirs. In the month of Ramadan they'll be sure to break their fast with it. They report that it is as sweet as milk; but for my part I could perceive no other taste in it than in common water, except that it was somewhat brackish. The *haggas*, when they come first to Mecca, drink of it unreasonably; by which means they are not only much purged but their flesh breaks out all in pimples; and this they call the purging of their spiritual corruptions. There are hundreds of pitchers, belonging to the temple, which in the month of Ramadan are fill'd with the said water and placed all along before the people, with cups to drink, as they are kneeling and waiting for *acsham nomas*, or evening service; and as soon as the *mezzins* or clerks, on the tops of the minarets, begin their bawling to call them to *nomas*, they fall a drinking thereof, before they begin their devotions. This *beer* or well of *Zem Zem* is in the midst of one of the little rooms before mentioned at each square of the *Beat*, distant about twelve or fourteen paces from it; out of which four men are employ'd to draw water, without any pay or reward, for any that shall desire it. Each of these men have two leather buckets ty'd to a rope on a small wheel, one of which comes up full while the other goes down empty. They do not only drink this water, but oftentimes bathe themselves with it; at which time they take off their clothes, only covering their lower parts with a thin wrapper, and one of the drawers pours on each person's head five or six buckets of water.<sup>1</sup> The person bathing may lawfully wash himself there-

<sup>1</sup> 'The worthy Mons. Thevenot saith that the waters of Mecca are bitter, but I never found them so, but as sweet and as good as any others, for ought as I could perceive.' [*Author's note*] Thévenot was referring to the Mecca wells in general; the water of the Zamzan well he thought '*passablement bonne*' (vol. II, p. 448). Burton remarks of the Zamzan water that 'to my taste it was a salt-bitter, which was exceedingly disagreeable' Philby, on the other hand, declares. 'I have always found it a pleasant and refreshing drink' (p. 41).

with above the middle but not his lower parts, because they account them not worthy, only letting the water take its way downwards. In short, they make use of this water only to drink, take *abdes*, and for bathing; neither may they take *abdes* with it, unless they first cleanse their secret parts with other common water. Yea, such an high esteem they have for it that many *hagges* carry it home to their respective countries, in little latten or tin pots, and present it to their friends, half a spoonful, it may be, to each; who receive it in the hollow of their hand with great care and abundance of thanks, sipping a little of it and bestowing the rest on their faces and naked heads; at the same time holding up their hands and desiring of God that they also may be so happy and prosperous as to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. The reason of their putting such an high value upon the water of this well is because, as they say, it is the place where Ishmael was laid by his mother Hagar. I have heard them tell the story exactly as it is recorded in the 21st chapter of Genesis; and they say that in the very place where the child paddled with his feet the water flowed out.<sup>1</sup>

I shall now inform you how, when, and where, they receive the honourable title of *hagges*, for which they are at all this pains and expence.

The *Curbaen Byram*, or 'the Feast of Sacrifice', follows two months and ten days after the *Ramadan* fast. The eighth day after the said two months they all enter into *hirrawem*, i.e. put on their mortifying habit again, and in that manner go to a certain hill, called *Gibbel el Orphat* (or *el Arasfat*), i.e. the mountain of knowledge; for there, they say, Adam first found and knew his wife Eve.<sup>2</sup> And they likewise say that she was buried at Gidda, near the Red Sea; at whose sepulchre all the *hagges* who come to Mecca by way of the Red Sea, perform two *erkaets nomas*, and (I think) no more. I could not but smile to hear this their ridiculous tradition (for so I must pronounce it), when, observing the marks which were set, the one at the head and the other

<sup>1</sup> 'The importance of Zamzan, which is situated in the mosque only a few paces from the *Ka'ba*, derives from the tradition that it was miraculously discovered by Hagar, when she and her child Ishmael were dying of thirst in the desert valley' (Philby, p. 41).

<sup>2</sup> For the legend, and for a note on other interpretations of the name of the hill, see Burton, vol. ii, pp. 188-9.

at the foot of the grave, I guess'd them to be about a bowshot distant from each other. On the middle of her supposed grave is a little mosque built, where the *hagges* pay their religious respect.<sup>1</sup>

This *gibbel* or hill is not so big as to contain the vast multitudes which resort thither; for 'tis said by them that there meet no less than seventy thousand souls every year, on the ninth day after the two months after Ramadan; and if it happen that in any year there be wanting some of that number, God (they say) will supply the deficiency by so many angels.<sup>2</sup> I do confess the number of *hagges* I saw at this mountain was very great; nevertheless, I cannot think they could amount to so many as seventy thousand. There are certain bound-stones placed round the *gibbel*, in the plain, to shew how far the sacred ground (as they esteem it) extends; and many are so zealous as to come and pitch their tents within these bounds some time before the hour of paying their devotion here comes, waiting for it. But why they so solemnly approach this mountain, beyond any other place, and receive from hence the title of *hagges*, I confess I do not more fully understand than what I have already said, giving but little heed to these delusions. I observ'd nothing worth seeing on this hill, for there was only a small cupola<sup>3</sup> on the top of it; neither are there any inhabitants nearer to it than Mecca. About one or two of the clock, which is the time of *eulea nomas* [Turkish *euilé* and Persian *namāz*], having wash'd and made themselves ready for it, they perform that, and at the same time perform *ekinde* [Turkish *ikindi*] *nomas*, which they never do at one time but upon this occasion, because at the time when *ekinde nomas* should be perform'd in the accustomed order, viz. about four of the clock in the afternoon, they are imploring pardon for their sins and receiving the *emaum's* benediction.

It was a sight, indeed, able to pierce one's heart to behold so many thousands, in their garments of humility and mortifica-

<sup>1</sup> Burton describes (vol. II, p. 273) the supposed grave, and gives a plan of it.

<sup>2</sup> 'They are not so modest 600,000 is the mystical number, others declare it to be incalculable. Oftentimes 70,000 have met at Arafat' (Burton).

<sup>3</sup> 'The cupola has now disappeared; there is a tall pillar of masonry-work, whitewashed, rising from a plastered floor, for praying' (Burton).

tion, with their naked heads and cheeks watered with tears, and to hear their grievous sighs and sobs, begging earnestly for the remission of their sins and promising newness of life, using a form of penitential expressions, and thus continuing for the space of four or five hours, viz until the time of *arsham nomas*, which is to be performed about half an hour after sunset. It is matter of sorrowful reflection to compare the indifference of many Christians with this zeal of those poor blind Mahometans, who will ('tis to be feared) rise up in judgment against them and condemn them.

After their solemn performance of their devotions thus at the *gibbel*, they all at once receive that honourable title of *hagge* from the *emam* (or *imam*) and are so stiled to their dying day. Immediately upon their receiving this name, the trumpet is sounded and they all leave the hill and return for Mecca, and being gone two or three miles on their way, they there rest for that night. But after *nomas*, before they go to rest, each person gathers nine and forty small stones, about the bigness of an hazle nut, the meaning of which I shall acquaint you with presently.

The next morning they move to a place called Mina, or Muna<sup>1</sup> (the place, as they say, where Abraham went to offer up his son Isaac,<sup>2</sup> and therefore in this place they sacrifice their sheep), it is about two or three miles from Mecca. I was here shown a stone, or little rock, which was parted in the middle. They told me that, when Abraham was going to sacrifice his son, instead of striking him, Providence directed his hand to this stone, which he clave in two. It must be a good stroke indeed!

Here they all pitch their tents, it being in a spacious plain, and spend the time of *Curbaen Byram*, viz three days. As soon as their tents are pitch'd and all things orderly dispos'd, every individual *hagge*, the first day, goes and throws seven of the small stones which they had gathered, against a small pillar or little square stone building.<sup>3</sup> Which action of theirs is intended

<sup>1</sup> For the ceremonies at Muna see Philby (p. 47)

<sup>2</sup> According to Muslim tradition it was Ishmael, not Isaac, who was to be sacrificed. 'The place to which Pitts alludes is still shown to pilgrims' (Burton)

<sup>3</sup> 'Monsieur de Thevenot saith that they throw these stones at the *gibbel* or mount, but indeed it is otherwise. Though I must needs say he is very exact in

to testify their defiance of the Devil and his deeds, for they at the same time pronounce the following words, viz *erzum le shetane nazbehe*, i.e. 'stone the Devil and them that please him'.<sup>1</sup> And there are two other of the like pillars, which are situated near one another; at each of which (I mean all three) the second day they throw seven stones,<sup>2</sup> and the same they do the third day. As I was going to perform this ceremony of throwing the stones, a facetious *hagge* met me. Saith he: 'You may save your labour at present, if you please, for I have hit out the Devil's eyes already.'

You must observe that, after they have thrown the seven stones the first day, the country people having brought great flocks of sheep to be sold, everyone buys a sheep and sacrifices it; some of which they give to their friends, some to the poor which come out of Mecca and the country adjacent (very ragged poor), and the rest they eat themselves, after which they shave their heads, throw off *huranem* and put on other clothes, and then salute one another with a kiss, saying *Byram mabarick ela*,<sup>3</sup> i.e., 'the Feast be a blessing to you'

These three days of *Byram* they spend festively, rejoicing with abundance of illuminations all night, shooting of guns, and fireworks flying in the air, for they reckon that all their sins are now done away, and that they shall, when they die, go directly to heaven, if they don't apostatize, and that for the future, if they keep their vow and do well, God will set down for every good action ten, but if they do ill, God will likewise reckon every evil action ten, and any person who, after receiving the title of *hagge*, shall fall back to a vicious course of life, is esteem'd to be very vile and infamous by them. Some have written that many of the *hagges*, after they have return'd home,

almost everything of Turkish matters, and I pay much deference to that great author' [*Author's note*] The exact statement occurs at pp 484-5 of his second volume. He was merely repeating what he had been told.

<sup>1</sup> Prof Arberry renders this *Urzum al shatān'a wa hizbah*, meaning 'stone the Devil and his underlings', and mentions that the word *hizb* is used in this sense in the *Qur'ān* (*sūra* LVIII, 20)

<sup>2</sup> The three pillars mark the successive spots where the Devil, in the shape of an old Shaykh, appeared to Adam, Abiahām, and Ishmael, and was driven back by the simple process, taught by Gabriel, of throwing stones about the size of a bean' (Burton, vol II, p 203)

<sup>3</sup> Turkish *Barram mubarak ola*



have been so austere to themselves as to pore a long time over redhot bricks or ingots of iron, and by that means willingly lose their sight, desiring to see nothing evil or prophane after so sacred a sight as the temple of Mecca; but I never knew any such thing done.

During their three days stay at Mina scarce any *hagge*, unless impotent, but thinks it his duty to pay his visit, once at least, to the temple at Mecca. They scarce cease running all the way thitherward, shewing their vehement desire to have a fresh sight of the *Beat Allah*; which as soon as ever they come in sight of, they burst into tears for joy. And after having perform'd *towoaf* for a while and a few *erkaets*, they return again to Mina. And when the three days of *Byram* are expired they all, with their tents, etc., come back again to Mecca.

They say that, after the *haggas* are gone from Mina to Mecca, God doth usually send a good shower of rain to wash away the filth and dung of the sacrifices there slain; and also that those vast numbers of little stones, which I told you the *haggas* throw in defiance of the Devil, are all carried away by the angels before the year comes about again. But I am sure I saw vast numbers of them that were thrown the year before lie upon the ground.

After they are return'd to Mecca, they can tarry there no longer than the stated time, which is about ten or twelve days; during which time there is a great fair held, where are sold all manner of East India goods, and abundance of fine stones for rings and bracelets etc., brought from Yeamane;<sup>1</sup> also of China ware and musk and variety of other curiosities. Now is the time in which the *haggas* are busily employ'd in buying, for they do not think it lawful to buy anything till they have received the title of *hagge*. Everyone almost now buys a *caffin* [Arabic *kafan*], or shroud, of fine linen to be buried in, for they never use coffins for that purpose; which might have been procured at Algier, or their other respective homes, at a much cheaper rate, but they choose to buy it here, because they have the advantage of dipping it in the holy water, *Zem Zem*. They are very careful to carry the said *caffin* with them wherever they

<sup>1</sup> 'Al-Yaman, Southern Arabia, whose "*Akik*", or cornelians, were celebrated' (Burton)

travel, whether by sea or land, that they may be sure to be buried therein.

The evening before they leave Mecca everyone must go to take their solemn leave of the *Beat*, entering in at the gate call'd *Babe el salem*, i.e. Welcome Gate [see p. 23]. And having continued at *tonoaf* as long as they please (which many do till they are quite tired), and it being the last time of their paying their devotions to it, they do it with floods of tears, as being extremely unwilling to part and bid farewell. And having drank their fill of the water *Zem Zem*, they go to one side of the *Beat*, their backs being towards the door call'd by the name of *Babe el weedoh* [Arabic *Bāb-al-Wadā'*], i.e. the Farewel Door, which is opposite to the Welcome Door; where having perform'd two or three *erkaets*, they get upon their legs and hold up their hands towards the *Beat*, making earnest petitions, and then keep going backward till they come to the abovesaid Farewel Gate, being guided by some or other; for they account it a very irreverent thing to turn their backs towards the *Beat* when they take leave of it. All the way as they retreat they continue petitioning, holding up their hands, with their eyes fix'd upon the *Beat* till they are out of sight of it; and so go to their lodgings weeping.

Ere I leave Mecca I shall acquaint you with a passage of a Turk to me in the temple cloyster in the night time, between *acsham nomas* and *gega nomas*, i.e. between the evening and the night services. The *hagges* do usually spend that time, or good part of it, which is about an hour and half, at *tonoaf*, and then sit down on the mats and rest themselves. This I did. And after I had sat a while and for my more ease at last was lying on my back, with my feet towards the *Beat*, but at a distance, as many others did. A Turk which sat by me ask'd me what countryman I was. 'A *Mogreebee*' [see p. 3], said I, (i.e., one of the West). 'Pray,' quoth he, 'how far west did you come?' I told him: 'from *Gazair* [Arabic *al-Jazā'ir*]' (i.e. Algier). 'Ah,' replied he, 'have you taken so much pains, and been at so much cost, and now be guilty of this irreverent posture before the *Beat Allah*?'

Here are many Moors who get a beggarly livelihood by selling models of the temple unto strangers, and in being

serviceable to the pilgrims. Here are also several *effendies*,<sup>1</sup> or masters of learning, who daily expound out of the *alcoran*, sitting in high chairs; and some of the learned pilgrims, whilst they are here, do undertake the same.

Under the room of the *Hanifees* (which I mentioned before) people do usually gather together between the hours of devotion, and sitting round cross-legged, it may be twenty or thirty of them, they have a very large pair of *tesbeehs* [Arabic *tasbīh*], or beads, each bead near as big as a man's fist, which they keep passing round, bead after bead, one to the other, all the time, using some devout expressions. I myself was once got in amongst them, and methought it was a pretty play enough for children. However, I was to appearance very devout.

There are likewise some dervises that get money here, as well as at other places, by burning of incense, swinging their censers as they go along before the people that are sitting; and this they do commonly on Fridays, their Sabbath. In all other *gamlers* [Arabic-Turkish *jāmi'ler*], or mosques, when the *hattib* [Arabic *khatīb*] is preaching and the people all sitting still at their devotion, they are all in ranks; so that the dervise, without the least disturbance to any, walks between every rank, with his censer in one hand and with the other takes his powder'd incense out of a little pouch that hangs by his side.

But though this place, Mecca, is esteem'd so very holy, yet it comes short of none for lewdness and debauchery. As for uncleanness, it is equal to Grand Cairo, and they will steal even in the Temple itself.<sup>2</sup>

I shall now entertain you with a story or two, which may be of use. The first of a certain beggar at Mecca, who would use no other expression to excite the people to charity towards him than this: *Her ne yapparsen gendinga* [Turkish *har na yaparsan kendina*], i.e., whatsoever thou dost, thou dost it to thyself; implying the reward that will hereafter be conferr'd on the charitable man. There passed by one of his neighbours (none of the best men, to be sure, but why he did attempt such a

<sup>1</sup> Turkish *efendi*, a title of respect given to learned men or to government officials.

<sup>2</sup> Burton records an unfavourable opinion of the morals of the Meccans (vol. II, p. 232).

desperate thing against the poor beggar I can't give an account), who thought with himself he'd try whether this saying of the beggar were true or not; and so goes and makes a cake of bread and mixes poison with it, and then gave it as an alms to the beggar, who put it thankfully up into his bag; the other the meanwhile thinking in a little time to hear of his death. But the beggar's saying prov'd true at length, and that unhappily for the man who gave him the poison'd cake; for it happen'd that a child of his, being at play and seeing the beggar eating, ask'd him for a piece of bread, and he very innocently gave the child the very same he had received from his father; who eat it and died. I have reason to believe this story; and if so, it is a wonderful argument to encourage charity to the poor. Another beggar would always use this expression in begging, viz., *Her ne wearersen elingla, O gidder senne la*,<sup>1</sup> i.e., whatsoever thou givest with thy hand, that will go with thee; implying after death. Which shews also that these blind Mahometans do believe a reward reserv'd hereafter for the noble vertue of charity.

Now, to what I have related concerning the Mahometans' great veneration for the *alcoran* and way of worship in their mosques, together with their pilgrimage to Mecca and manner of devotion there, I shall only add that I was lately perusing an English *alcoran*,<sup>2</sup> where I find in the preface that the translator saith that the vulgar are not permitted to read the *alcoran*, but (as the poor Romanists) to live and die in an implicit faith of what they are taught by their priests. This I utterly deny; for it is not only permitted and allowed of, but it is (as I intimated before) looked on as very commendable in any person to be diligent in the reading of it. And the same difference there is amongst us between learned and illiterate persons, there is with them between such as can and cannot read. They give eight or ten dollars for a copy of the *alcoran*. Their dollar is about two shillings and three pence.

Having thus given you an account of the 'Turks' pilgrimage to Mecca and of their worship there (the manner and circum-

<sup>1</sup> *Har na verersen elinle o gider senen ilé* (Turkish).

<sup>2</sup> 'The *alcoran* amongst the Turks is strictly forbidden to be translated into any other language.' [*Author's note.*]

stances of which I have faithfully and punctually related and may challenge the world to convict me of a known falshood), I now come to take leave of the temple and town of Mecca.

Having hired camels of the carriers, we set out; but we give as much for the hire of one from Mecca to Egypt (which is about forty days journey) as the real worth of it is, viz. about five or six pounds sterling. If it happen that the camel dies by the way, the carrier is to supply us with another, and therefore those carriers who come from Egypt to Mecca with the caravan bring with them several spare camels; for there is hardly a night passeth but many die upon the road. For if a camel should chance to fall, 'tis seldom known that it is able to rise again; and if it should, they despair of its being capable of performing the journey or ever being useful more. 'Tis a common thing, therefore, when a camel once falls, to take off its burden and put it on another and then kill it; which the poorer sort of the company eat. I myself have eaten of camel's flesh, and 'tis very sweet and nourishing. If a camel tires, they e'en leave him upon the place.

The first day we set out from Mecca it was without any order at all, all hurly burly; but the next day everyone labour'd to get forward. And in order to it, there was many times much quarrelling and fighting; but after everyone had taken his place in the caravan, they orderly and peaceably kept the same place till they came to Grand Cairo. They travel four camels in a breast; which are all tied one after the other, like as in teams.<sup>1</sup> The whole body is called a caravan; which is divided into several *cottors*, or companies, each of which hath its name and consists (it may be) of several thousand camels; and they move, one *cottor* after another, like distinct troops. In the head of each *cottor* is some great gentleman or officer, who is carried in a thing like an horse-litter, born by two camels, one before and the other behind; which is covered all over with searcloth<sup>2</sup> and over that again with green broadcloth, and set forth very handsomely. If the said great person hath a wife with him, she is

<sup>1</sup> 'The usual way now is in "Kitar", or in Indian file, each camel's halter being tied to the tail of the beast that precedes him. Pitts' "*cottor*" must be a *kitar*, but he uses the word in another of its numerous senses' (Burton)

<sup>2</sup> Cere-cloth, i.e. cloth coated with wax.

carried in another of the same.<sup>1</sup> In the head of every *cottor* there goes likewise a sumpter camel, which carries his treasure, etc. This camel hath two bells, about the bigness of our market bells, hanging one on each side, the sound of which may be heard a great way off. Some other of the camels have round bells about their necks, some about their legs, like those which our carriers put about their fore-horses' necks; which, together with the servants (who belong to the camels and travel on foot) singing all night, make a pleasant noise, and the journey passes away delightfully. They say this musick makes the camels brisk and lively. Thus they travel in good order every day till they come to Grand Cairo. And were it not for this order, you may guess what confusion would be amongst such a vast multitude.

They have lights by night (which is the chief time of travelling, because of the exceeding heat of the sun by day), which are carried on the tops of high poles, to direct the *hagges* in their march.<sup>2</sup> They are somewhat like iron stoves, into which they put short dry wood, which some of the camels are loaded with. 'Tis carried in great sacks, which have an hole near the bottom, where the servants take it out as they see the fires need a recruit. Every *cottor* hath one of these poles belonging to it, some of which have ten, some twelve, of these lights on their tops, or more or less. And they are likewise of different figures as well as numbers; one perhaps oval way, like a gate; another triangular, or like an N or M, etc.; so that everyone knows by them his respective *cottor*. They are carried in the front, and set up in the place where the caravan is to pitch, before that comes up, at some distance from one another. They are also carried by day, not lighted; but yet by the figure and number of them the *hagges* are directed to what *cottor* they belong, as soldiers are by their colours where to rendezvous; and without such directions it would be impossible to avoid confusion in such a vast number of people. Every day, viz. in the morning, they pitch their tents and rest several hours. When the camels are unloaded, the owners drive them to water and give them their

<sup>1</sup> 'This vehicle is the "Takht-rawan" of Arabia' (Burton).

<sup>2</sup> 'He describes the Mashals still in use. Lane has sketched them (*Mod Egypt*, chap. vi)' (Burton).

provender, etc. So that we had nothing to do with them besides helping to load them.

As soon as our tents were pitch'd, my business was to make a little fire and get a pot of coffee. When we had eat some small matter and drank the coffee, we lay down to sleep. Between eleven and twelve we boiled something for dinner; and having dined, lay down again till about four in the afternoon, when the trumpet was sounded which gave notice to everyone to take down their tents, pack up their things, and load their camels, in order to proceed in their journey. It takes up about two hours' time e'er they are all in their places again. At the time of *acsham nomas*, and also *gega nomas*, they make a halt and perform their *sallah* (so punctual are they in their worship), and then they travel till next morning. If water be scarce, what I call an imaginary *abdes*<sup>1</sup> will do. As for ancient men, it being very troublesome for them to alight off the camels and get up again, 'tis lawful for them to defer these two times of *nomas* till the next day; but they will be sure to perform it then.

As for provisions, we bring enough out of Egypt to suffice us till we return thither again. At Mecca we compute how much will serve us for one day, and consequently for the forty days' journey to Egypt; and if we find we have more than we may well guess will suffice us for so long a time, we sell the overplus at Mecca. There is a charity, maintain'd by the Grand Seignior, for water to refresh the poor who travel on foot all the way; for there are many such undertake this journey or pilgrimage without any money, relying on the charity of the *hagges* for subsistence, knowing that they largely extend it at such a time.

Every *hagge* carries his provisions, water, bedding, etc. with him; and usually three or four diet together, and sometimes discharge a poor man's expences the whole journey for his attendance on them. There was an Irish *renegado*, who was taken very young, insomuch that he had not only lost his Christian religion but his native language also. This man had endured thirty years slavery in Spain and in the French gallies, but was afterwards redeemed and came home to Algier. He

<sup>1</sup> 'The sand ablution—lawful when water is wanted for maintaining life' (Burton).

was look'd upon as a very pious man, and a great zealot, by the Turks, for his not turning from the Mahometan faith, notwithstanding the great temptations he had so to do. Some of my neighbours, who intended for Mecca the same year I went with my patroon thither, offered this *renegado* that, if he would serve them on this journey, they would defray his charges throughout. He gladly embraced the offer; and I remember, when we arrived at Mecca, he passionately told me that God had delivered him out of an hell upon earth, meaning his former slavery in France and Spain, and had brought him into an heaven upon earth, viz. Mecca. I admired much his zeal, but pitied his condition.

Their water they carry in goatskins, which they fasten to one side of their camels. It sometimes happens that no water is to be met with for two, three, or more days; but yet it is well known that a camel is a creature that can live long without drinking; God in his wise providence so ordering it, for otherwise it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to travel thro' the parch'd deserts of Arabia. Every tent's company have their convenient place for easing nature, viz. four long poles fixed square, about three or four feet distance from each other, which is hung round with canvas, because (as I said before) the Mahometans esteem it very odious to be seen while they are exonerating. And besides, otherwise, if they should go too far, they would hardly be able to find the way to their tent again.

In this journey many times the skulking, thievish Arabs do much mischief to some of the *hagges*; for in the night time they'll steal upon them, especially such as are on the outside of the caravan; and being taken to be some of the servants that belong to the carriers or owners of the camels, they are not suspected. When they see an *hagge* fast asleep (for it is usual for them to sleep on the road), they loose a camel, before and behind, and one of the thieves leads it away, with the *hagge* upon its back asleep. Another of them in the meantime pulls on the next camel, to tie it to the camel from whence the halter of the other was cut; for if that camel be not fasten'd again to the leading camel it will stop, and all that are behind will then stop of course; which might be a means of discovering the robbers.



When they have gotten the stolen camel, with his rider, at a convenient distance from the caravan and think themselves out of danger, they awake the *hagge* and sometimes destroy him immediately, but at other times, being a little more inclin'd to mercy, they strip him naked and let him return to the caravan<sup>1</sup>

About the tenth easy day's journey after we come out of Mecca, we enter into Medina, the place where Mahomet lies intomb'd Although it be (as I take it) two or three days' journey out of the direct way from Mecca to Egypt, yet the *haggas* pay their visit there, for the space of two days, and come away the third Those Mahometans which live to the southward of Mecca, at [as ?] the East Indies and thereaway, are not bound to make a visit to Medina, but to Mecca only, because it would be so much out of their way But such as come from Turkey, Tartary, Egypt, and Africa think themselves obliged so to do

Medina is but a little town and poor, yet it is wall'd round and hath in it a great mosque (but nothing near so big as the temple at Mecca) In one corner of the mosque is a place built about fourteen or fifteen paces square About this place are great windows<sup>2</sup> fenced with brass grates. In the inside it is deck'd with some lamps and ornaments It is arch'd all over head I find some relate<sup>3</sup> that there are no less than three thousand lamps about Mahomet's tomb, but it is a mistake, for there are not (as I verily believe) an hundred, and I speak what I know and have been an eyewitness of In the middle of this place is the tomb of Mahomet, where the corpse of that bloody impostor is laid, which hath silk curtains all around it, like a bed (which curtains are not costly nor beautiful) There is nothing of his tomb to be seen by any, by reason of the curtains round it, nor are any of the *haggas* permitted to enter there. None go in but the eunuchs who keep watch over it, and they only to light the lamps which burn there by night and to sweep and cleanse the place All the privilege the *haggas* have is only to

<sup>1</sup> 'There are still some Hijazi Badawin whose young men, before entering life, risk everything in order to plunder a Haji They care little for the value of the article stolen, the exploit consists in stealing it' (Burton)

<sup>2</sup> 'These are not windows, but simply the inter columnar spaces filled with grating (Burton)

<sup>3</sup> See note on p 4

thrust in their hands at the windows<sup>1</sup> between the brass grates and to petition the dead juggler, which they do with a wonderful deal of reverence, affection, and zeal. My patroon had his silk handkerchief stole out of his bosom while he stood at his devotion here.

It is storied by some that the coffin of Mahomet hangs up by the attractive virtue of a loadstone to the roof of the mosque, but, believe me, 'tis a false story. When I looked through the brass grate, I saw as much as any of the *hagges*, and the top of the curtains which cover'd the tomb were not half so high as the roof or arch. So that 'tis impossible his coffin should be hanging there. I never heard the Mahometans say anything like it. On the outside of this place where Mahomet's tomb is are some sepulchres of their reputed saints,<sup>2</sup> among which is one prepared for Christ Jesus, when he shall come again personally into the world,<sup>3</sup> for they hold that Christ will come again in the flesh, forty years before the end of the world, to confirm the Mahometan faith, and say, likewise, that our Saviour was not crucified in person but in effigy, or one like him.

Medina is much supplied by the opposite Abyssine country, which is on the other side of the Red Sea. From thence they have corn and necessaries brought in ships—an odd sort of vessels as ever I saw, their sails being made of matting, such as they use in their houses and mosques to tread upon.

When we had taken our leave of Medina, the third day, and travell'd about ten days more, we were met by a great many Arabians, who brought abundance of fruit to us, particularly raisins, but from whence I cannot tell.<sup>4</sup> When we came within fifteen days' journey of Grand Cairo, we were met by many people who came from thence, with their camels laden with presents for the *hagges*, sent from their friends and relations, as

<sup>1</sup> 'These are the small apertures in the southern grating' (Burton)

<sup>2</sup> See Philby, pp. 62, 64, and Burton, chap. xxi

<sup>3</sup> 'It is popularly asserted that in the Hujrah [the chamber in which Muhammad died and was buried] there is now spare place for only a single grave, reserved for Isa bin Maryam [Jesus, the son of Mary] after his second coming' (Burton, vol. 1, p. 325)

<sup>4</sup> 'The caravan must have been near the harbour of Muwaylah, where supplies are abundant' (Burton). (Al-)Muwaylih is on the Arabian coast, in lat. 27° 40' N. It is now a mere village.

sweetmeats, etc. But some of them came rather for profit, to sell fresh provisions to the *hagges* and trade with them.

About ten days before we got to Cairo, we came to a very long steep hill, called Ackaba, which the *hagges* are usually much afraid how they shall be able to get up. Those who can will walk it. The poor camels, having no hoofs, find it very hard work, and many drop here. They were all untied and we dealt gently with them, moving very slowly and often halting. Before we came to this hill I observed no descent, and when we were at the top there was none, but all plain as before.

We passed by Mount Sinai by night, and perhaps when I was asleep; so that I had no prospect of it.

When we came within seven days' journey of Cairo, we were met by abundance of people more, some hundreds, who came to welcome their friends and relations. But it being night, it was difficult to find those they wanted, and therefore, as the caravans past along, they kept calling them aloud by their names, and by this means found them out. And when we were within three days' journey of it, we had many camel-loads of the water of the Nile brought us to drink. But the day and the night before we came to Cairo thousands came out to meet us, with extraordinary rejoicing. 'Tis thirty-seven days' journey from Mecca to Cairo, and three days we tarry by the way; which together make up (as I said) forty days' journey. And in all this way there is scarce any green thing to be met with, nor beast or fowl to be seen or heard; nothing but sand and stones, excepting one place which we pass'd by night. I suppose it was a village, where were some trees and (as we thought) gardens. We travell'd through a certain valley, which is called by the name of *Attash el wait*, i.e. the river of fire; the vale being so excessively hot that the very water in their goatskins hath sometimes been dried up with the gloomy, scorching heat. But we had the happiness to pass thorough it when it rain'd, so that the fervent heat was much allayed thereby; which the *hagges* look'd on as a great blessing, and did not a little praise God for it.

When we came to Cairo the plague was very hot there, inso-much that it was reported there died sixty thousand within a fortnight's time. Wherefore we hastned away to Roseet, and

from thence to Alexandria; where in a little time there was a ship of Algier ready to transport us thither. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The plague was hot in Alexandria at this time, and some persons infected with it being taken on board our ship, which was bound for Algier, the plague reigned amongst us; inso-much that, besides those that recovered, we threw twenty persons overboard who died of it. And truly I was not a little afraid of the distemper, and wish'd I were safe at Algier; hoping that if I were got there I should escape it. But soon after we got ashore there, I was seized with it, but thro' the divine goodness escap'd death. It rose under my arm, and the boil which usually accompanies the plague rose on my leg. After it was much swollen, I was desirous to have it lanced, but my patroon told me it was not soft enough. There was a neighbour, a Spaniard slave, who advised me to rost an onion and apply a piece of it, dipt in oil, to the swelling, to mollify it; which accordingly I did. The next day it became soft, and then my patroon had it lanced; and, thro' the blessing of my good God, I recovered. Such a signal mercy I hope I shall never forget; a mercy so circumstantiated, considering everything, that my soul shall thankfully call it to mind as long as I have any being; for I was just return'd from Mecca when this mercy was dispens'd to me. I do observe the divine providence plainly in it, and hope ever to make the best use of it.

<sup>1</sup> Here Pitts tells how at Alexandria he met an English sailor who had been a schoolmate of his, and was able to give him news of his family. To this man Pitts entrusted a letter and presents for both parents.



## II

A NARRATIVE BY  
WILLIAM DANIEL  
OF HIS JOURNEY FROM  
LONDON TO MOCHA  
AND BACK  
1700-1



A  
JOURNAL  
OR  
ACCOUNT  
OF

*William Daniel,*

His late Expedition or Undertaking  
to go from

London to Surrat.

IN

INDIA,

Giving a short, but impartial Relation of  
the Dangers, Distresses, Fatigues, and Hinderances,  
happening to him during the said Expedition till his Return to *England*.

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L O N D O N,

Printed in the Year, M D C C I I.

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# THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY

TO THE HONOURABLE THE GOVERNOUR, DEPUTY  
GOVERNOUR, AND COMMITTEES OF THE RIGHT  
HONOURABLE EAST-INDIA COMPANY.

HONOURED SIRS,

I presume to present to your view a short account of a long and dangerous journey, not out of vanity of erecting myself into an author, but in obedience to your commands; prompted thereto by pure gratitude and obligation for your kind resentments of [i.e. reactions to] the hazards of my life, as well as your generous encouragements of my labours.

I could not have wished myself more fortunate than I should have been in the success of this undertaking. The attempt was very agreeable to my genius [i.e. natural aptitude] and inclination, and I had a zeal for your service strong enough to remove common obstacles; but there are some difficulties not to be surmounted, unless a man could command the winds, the seas, and the passions of barbarous infidels, more outrageous than either, and foresee all accidents which may suddenly spring up, contrary to his design.

However, I have this satisfaction—that nothing was wanting in my endeavours; and if by the tedious exercise of my limbs and patience I have trod out a path that may be of use hereafter, or if by this attempt I have excited others to an emulation in your service, I have not wholly lost my aim. But for my personal inclinations, as the surest testimony thereof, I here dedicate, not my Journal only, but myself to your service, with a resolution not to decline the most daring enterprise that may tend to promote the glory and welfare of that great society, which has so much augmented the riches of this nation at home and raised the reputation of it abroad.

In the meantime, if what I here present prove but so prosperous as to obtain your favourable approbation and acceptance, it will be a kind compensation of my well meant endeavours, and the pains I have taken will be abundantly rewarded by the pleasures of having approved myself,

Honoured Sirs,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

WILLIAM DANIEL.

## THE PREFACE

TRAVELLING abroad and seeing foreign countries and their affairs and customs has, ever since I had any matureness and understanding, been my chiefest satisfaction; nor could my friends or strangers (even in my youthful days) divert me from that humour, but still the pleasure of knowing things remote and novel to my native country outvy'd any difficulties or dangers, which were often thrown in my way to obstruct my desires, and to indulge my humour of travelling. This opportunity was lately offered me by the Honourable the Governour and the Committees of the Old East India Company, who wanted a messenger to convey their dispatches to Surrat by land sooner than they could by sea; about which I had the honour to have a conference with them, which ended with such good effect that, they being assured of my resolution, integrity and honesty, tho' the undertaking seemed improbable at first, yet at last they were resolved and concluded to put me to a tryal, which was to endeavour to be at Surrat or Bombay by the last day of August, with their commands. This was no sooner agreed upon and received but I immediately dispatcht my particular [i.e. private] concerns, and set out the next morning; proceeding in my aforesaid resolution and undertaking, the account and true relation of which is as follows.

*A Journal or Account of William Daniel his late Expedition or Undertaking to go from London to Surrat.*

I DEPARTED from London May the 4th, 1700, in a wherry for Graves end, where, after having a little refreshed myself, the wind and tyde being against me, I immediately sent to get post horses ready, which as soon as provided (it being break of day), I proceeded for Dover, where I arrived about eleven a clock. Where enquiring for a conveyance for Calice [Calais], and offering any money, I found it very difficult. But accidentally I found there was a French merchant who had hired a small boat bound for Bologne, to whom I immediately addressed myself, desiring him to permit me to accompany him, offering to pay any charge he should desire, which, to my great satisfaction, he frankly embraced, adding many complimentary courtesies and seeming to be highly pleased. We dined together, and an hour after embark'd, having ordered some necessaries (for fear of unfortunate accidents) to be put on board this small boat, our crew being only six men, my companion and self, and (for want of a better) I was forc'd to be steersman.

We put off in a perfect calm, but before we got halfway over, the elements giving us too true a specimen of their inconstant natures, it began to thunder and lighten extreamly, encreasing its violence to that extraordinary degree that, before we could reach the French coast, the rain and wind, as if contending which should outvye each other, gave but an indifferent pleasant beginning to the hopes of my expected enterprise. Besides, another dismal inconvenience attended us, for, night coming on, we were utterly incapable of seeing the shoar, and besides, the coast near Bologne being very rocky and dangerous, we were forced to put before the wind for Calice. But Omnipotence was pleased, not long after, to favour us; for accidentally by the way we met a billander<sup>1</sup> at her anchor, bound for Bologne

<sup>1</sup> A two-masted hoy (Dutch *bylander*), much used in Holland for coastal or canal traffic

next tide, she being employed in the service for carrying of stones for the fortification of Dunkirk; on whom we embarked (you may suppose with considerable satisfaction, it being morally impossible that our small boat should have lived in such a tempest much longer); but, Providence protecting us, we got there safe at seven the next morning. Where my companion regaled me with a brace of partridges and a bottle of champagne, while my post horses were getting ready. And refitting me with a hat (having lost my own in the aforesaid storm), I immediately departed; and lay that night at Abbeville, being 28 leagues from Calice; where lives the Postmaster-General, to whom I had a letter of recommendation. And having at that time no luggage to hinder my speedy passage, he readily furnished me with his best horses; by which means, and furthered also by a willing mind, resolving to make the best of my way, I arrived that night at Paris, tho' not a little weary, the roads and the weather not extreamly consulting either my pleasure or business.

Early the next morning, being the 9th instant, I took post for Lyons and Marseilles. Where I arrived the 15th; and the next day waited on Mons. St. Amand<sup>1</sup> and Messrs. Lambe & Baskett, on whom I had credit for several hundred pounds, which I converted into pistoles;<sup>2</sup> and the next morning, at break of day, departed in a felucca<sup>3</sup> for Genoa, accompanied by a French marquis, who was going to Venice to see his mistress, as I afterwards understood by some discourse that happened, the nature of the French being very open in discovery as well as guilty in their intriguing affairs.

We lay that night in an old castle, 80 miles from Marseilles; from whence setting out again next morning, we had so little wind we only made 60 miles that day, to a village called St Turpe;<sup>4</sup> where we were no sooner arrived but the rising gales began to blow so freshly, and against us, that we were forced to lye by for two days. There are no people certainly in the

<sup>1</sup> Mons D. St Amand appears to have been the Company's correspondent at Marseilles. A letter from him to that body of 31 May advised that Daniel had drawn two hundred pounds (*Letter Books*, vol 12, p. 347).

<sup>2</sup> The Spanish pistole, a gold coin worth 16s 9d. (Tavernier, vol 1, p 328).

<sup>3</sup> A small coastal vessel, propelled by sails or oars, or both.

<sup>4</sup> St. Tropez, on the gulf of the same name, a few miles south-west of Frejus

world so fearful and cowardly as the Genoese. The next day, being somewhat calmer, we put to sea again, and about two hours afterwards we espied a small tartan<sup>1</sup> standing towards us, at sight of which they, fearing her to be an Algerine,<sup>2</sup> ran immediately ashore, half dead with fear. And here 'twill not be amiss to relate the ridiculous helps those superstitious fools appropriate to themselves in time of their concerted danger. First, they lighted a lamp and set it before a little saint they had painted on a piece of board, and then went all to prayers, imploring its assistance with that eagerness and devotion as if the wooden deity could have quell'd the two elements, air and water, as well as it could have added to the third element of fire, if it had been thrown into it, to try its celestial nature.

The marquis and I, at that time of their consternation, were but indifferently employed, going into the country shooting of rabbits, and at our return found the devotion and fear of our companions both at an end, the dreadful vessel proving to be only a boat of Trapani,<sup>3</sup> fishing for coral. So that, being securely rid of this terrible barr to our voyage, we put to sea again, and lay that night at Monoca [Monaco]. The next morning [we] set sail again, and we had not sail'd above four hours but off of St Remo<sup>4</sup> it began to blow very hard, so that we were forced to put in there till the weather was fair again. And its inconstancy had now tired my patience enough with that small boat, whereupon I immediately, understanding there was a bark bound for Civita Vecchia, I agreed with the patron [master Ital *padrone*] to put me ashore at Leghorn. Where I arrived the 26th, but [was] not so fortunate as to find the ship I expected, Captain Sovaire, bound for Alexandretta,<sup>5</sup> he being departed four days before, to my great discomfort.

Nor was this the only occasion of exercising my patience, but, to add to my discontent, the next day after my arrival I

<sup>1</sup> A one masted vessel

<sup>2</sup> A piratical vessel from Algiers

<sup>3</sup> Trapani, on the western end of Sicily

<sup>4</sup> San Remo, on the Italian Riviera, 26 miles east north east of Nice

<sup>5</sup> Better known as Scanderoon (Turkish *Iskenderun*). Both names reflect the tradition that the town was founded by Alexander the Great. It is the port of Aleppo, which is about 60 miles inland. The vessel Daniel missed was the *St Augustino*. This appears from a letter addressed to the Company by John Burrows, Consul at Leghorn, on 7 June 1700 (*Letter Books*, vol. 12, p. 348).

received the unwelcome news of the death of my honoured father. When I immediately wrote a condoling letter to my honoured mother, and another likewise to Sir Thomas Cook,<sup>1</sup> to satisfie him and the Honourable Committee about my proceedings and, in pursuance of my promise at parting, to assure them that nothing but death, sickness, or imprisonment should hinder the prosecution of my design for Indea; tho' my presence at home then would have been no small advantage to my own particular affairs. However, qualifying my sorrow for my loss and misfortune as well as I could, I embarked myself on board a French ship bound for Alexandria, and accordingly departed on the second of June. And after an indifferent good passage of 18 days (thanks be to God), we safely arrived at Alexandria; where I immediately hired a bark for Scandaroon, and at the same dispatch'd an express to Grand Cairo, to Consul Fleetwood<sup>2</sup> for his advice, he having been formerly at Indea; the answer of which brought me all the encouragement imaginable and made me hope the difficulty of my enterprise would not be so considerable as afterwards (not only to my sorrow but likewise to my great disappointment of your affairs) I found it.

So that, the next day after the return of my express, I hired a boat for Roset[ta], and arrived there about noon, after a very dangerous passage over a *bogasse*<sup>3</sup> or barr at the entrance of the Nile, occasioned by the strong westerly winds against the evacuation of the Nile, which began to encrease considerably, to the unexpressible joy of the natives. Here Fortune favouring me with a smile, I had the good luck to meet with a French merchant, bound for Cairo; and after wee had dined together, we hired a boat to ourselves and put off that evening for the aforesaid city, where, after some impositions, we arrived safe and made our first entrance into the suburbs of Cairo, called Bollack. From whence I sent to the English Consul at Old

<sup>1</sup> Governor of the Old East India Company.

<sup>2</sup> Miles Fleetwood, who had been two years in the country, was in 1697 appointed consul for Egypt by the Levant Company, and was formally recognized as such by the Pasha of Egypt in July 1698. He held the post until 1704 (Wood, pp. 125, 165). I have not succeeded in tracing his connexion with India, but there were certainly other Fleetwoods in that country about that time.

<sup>3</sup> Turkish *boghaz*. This sand-bar is mentioned by many travellers.

Cairo for his janizaries<sup>1</sup> to conduct me to his house, which accordingly he did, and during my stay there (which was but four days<sup>2</sup>) treated me with all manner of civility, which I am perpetually oblig'd to own, as also Messieurs Vernon and Goodman, Mr Merchant<sup>3</sup> and Mr Bower, factors there.

Nor were the French, who abound here (as in most scales<sup>4</sup> of the Levant), backward in shewing me their courtesies, there being, at Alexandria and Cairo, above a hundred merchants. The chiefest of which did me the honour to accompany me, with the English merchants, and divert me, shewing me the curiosities of the place, as the famous Pyramides, the castle [i.e. citadel], and several other famous antiquities. Amongst which, five miles south-east from thence, where once flourished the regal city of Memphis (the strength and glory of old Ægypt) stands the sumptuous temples of Apis and Vulcan, the ancient mummy's, Joseph's Well, and his granaries, obliging [i.e. gratifying] to the curiosities of most strangers, as also the Pillar of Marcus Aurelius. And at my return to Old Cairo most kindly entertained me at the convent of Capuchines, where our blessed Saviour Christ and his holy mother were hid, when the soldiers of Herod pursued them.<sup>5</sup>

This city is very large, and populous to such a vast degree that it is credibly averr'd that in the year 1618 there dyed above 600,000 people of the plague, and scarcely to be mist. This city is divided into four parts, as Old Cairo, New Cairo, Bolack, and Carafat,<sup>6</sup> and in the midst of which is a large fair plain (but by

<sup>1</sup> See p. 16. These soldiers were hired out to individuals as guards.

<sup>2</sup> This statement is inconsistent with the one made by Daniel to the Company on his return, wherein he gave the date of his arrival at Cairo as 30 June. See also his reference to June on p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Merchant was Consul at Cairo from 1704 to 1706 (Wood, p. 165).

<sup>4</sup> Used here in the sense of centres of commerce.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel here gives us the rather jumbled impressions left by a course of sight-seeing. His 'temple of Apis' is the Serapeum at Memphis. Joseph's Well (see p. 18) is in the citadel of Cairo, while his 'granaries' (which in reality had nothing to do with the patriarch) are now represented by ruins in the old city. At least two churches claim to have been the refuge of the Holy Family. To the 'pillar of Marcus Aurelius' I have found no clue. The 'mummy's' were the embalmed bodies of past generations of Egyptians. These were disinterred and exported, whole or in parts, to England and other countries for use in medicine (see Lithgow, p. 183, and Sanderson, p. 44).

<sup>6</sup> By 'Old Cairo' is meant Fustat, the original city, now in ruins. 'New Cairo' was its successor (lying to the northwards). For 'Bolack' see p. 8. 'Carafat' (the



the Arabians only known by the name of Mizar<sup>1</sup>), which is very pleasant in all its seasons, especially in March, being full of corn. And in the month of June I had the diversion of seeing the Bashaw drawing up his souldiers, consisting of several thousand beautiful horse and foot, adorn'd with very rich equipage and furniture. Yet though this plain in the season of June be proper and convenient to exercise their military affairs, yet it is otherwise in the month of August, being emerged<sup>2</sup> by the overflowing of the Nile, and during that time as full of boats as the river Thames on a Lord Mayor's Day,<sup>3</sup> and in the night illustrating their splendour by frequent and admirable fireworks and rejoicing, after their barbarous manner, as much as possible they can, for the expected plenty of the year ensuing; the water leaving a strange kind of nitre behind at its ebbing away, which improves the land for the growth of grain to a very wonderful degree.

This city by several authors is accounted to be the largest in the world; whose extent, number of houses, streets, mosques, canes [*khans*: see p. 13], bazars, etc. you'll find in most modern authors, and too tedious for me to insert. But to add to its felicity 'tis generally blest with a very good trade.

Here I had the luck to find an Englishman who had turn'd Turk. He was a West-country native. His name was formerly Gardiner, but at present Haggy Bıram [Haji Bairam]; who had been so much beholden to Fortune [as] to become very rich there, and to whom I was oblig'd for many civilities, and found him indeed the only person there that thought it worth his while to be civil to strangers; the natives being generally moross, slothful, and lazy. The men daily lye basking in the sun, and wholly depending upon the Nile's fertility for their subsistence; and the women so sauntering, sluttish, and negligent, not caring for employment, tho' 'tis even to keep themselves clean; having

<sup>1</sup> 'Carafarr' of Lithgow, p. 179) is Qarāfa, situated to the southward of the present city.

<sup>2</sup> Prof Arberry thinks this may be *Mazār*, 'the place of pilgrimage'. Possibly the reference is to the open ground between the city and Bulāq.

<sup>3</sup> For 'immerged' (now obsolete), with the sense of 'submerged'.

<sup>4</sup> At that period the Lord Mayor, on entering upon his year of office, still went by water to Westminster, attended by the barges of the City Companies, to receive the sovereign's approval of his election.

(by reason of the heat) very few cloaths on; and the virgins [i.e. young girls] commonly wearing none at all.

Though I found little or no good nature or hospitallity from these barbarians in general, yet my kind renegade, Haggy Biram, daily made it his business to oblige me with fresh courtesies; who, tho' an apostate from the state of grace, shewed himself very christianlike in the state of my concerns, and whose humanity obliges me to shew my extreamest gratitude in his commendation. He not only procured me a firmand [see p. 64] from the Bashaw to embark on the Red Sea, but also recommended me to a guide to conduct me safe to Sues, who was the prince of the rogues of that country; obliging him to take his uttermost care in furnishing me with good camels; which accordingly he did, and mounted me on his own mare.

So, after having taken leave of my friends, who accompanied me out of the city,<sup>1</sup> on the 7th of July we departed; our caravan consisting of about 12,000 camels, loaden with merchandise, for Sues. And although it is not above 70 miles<sup>2</sup> from Cairo to Sues, we were four days in our journey; passing the tedious and terrible sands with great difficulty and uneasiness, by reason of the violent heat. Nor was there any water in all that road, but what we carried with us; which made this fatigue more extraordinary than I could have imagined it. But patience (the only remedy in such cases) I was fain to resort to, by force, and was obliged to exercise it upon several occasions. Therefore, undergoing the trouble as well as I could, without repining (which would have been to little purpose), upon the eleventh at night we arrived at Sues.

Sues is a seaport town at the foot of the Red Sea, and hath its name from that neck of land which is between the Red Sea and the Mediteranean, called the Isthmus of Sues,<sup>3</sup> which separates Ægypt from Arabia. To which port belongs about 40 sail of ships, who trade every year between that place and Judda [Jidda]; their outward merchandise being little or nothing but provisions<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A compliment usually paid in the East to a departing traveller.

<sup>2</sup> It is nearly 80; but a 'mile' was a variable length in those days.

<sup>3</sup> But the isthmus is named from the town, not the town from the isthmus.

<sup>4</sup> Varthema (p. 37) notes the dependence of Mecca and Jidda upon Egypt for food; and Burton (vol. ii, p. 347) comments 'This is still correct. Suez supplies Jeddah with corn and other provisions.'

and pieces of eight, and their return all sorts of spices, muslins, silks, precious stones, pearls and amber-grease, musk, coffee and many other drugs; which are brought by the trading vessels which come yearly from India to Mocha and Judda, and transported by land on camels to Cairo and Alexandria.

Here I had a letter of recommendation from my aforesaid friendly renegade to his correspondent, to provide me with a lodging; but, arriving late, was oblig'd to take my quarters upon the tarras of a poor Greek church, where I was welcomed by all manner of vermin the scorching season could afford; who, by their perpetual visitation of me every minute, gave no small addition to the unpleasantness of my night's entertainment after the disagreeable adventure of my troublesome journey.

But Madam Fortune some little time after (perhaps to keep me from despairing) was pleased to consider my miserable condition, and gave me opportunity to find a ship (contrary to my expectation) immediately upon departure and bound for Judda; where were on board an hundred of the chiefest janizaries of Grand Cairo, appointed for that year to guard the church of Mecca. Upon the advice of which, the next day I waited on the captain; who at first appearance answered my demands for conveyance forward with a surly, moross air, proper enough for one in his place but at that time extreamly disagreeable to me, he seeming very unwilling to comply with my desire and request. But producing the Grand Signiour's firmand from the Bashaw of Cairo,<sup>1</sup> and something more mollifying to his temper, viz. a purse of gold (the only and secure qualifier of barbarity over all the kingdoms of the earth where its power is known), we soon after came to an agreement; he obliging himself to take me and my goods aboard and convey me to the aforementioned Judda.

Accordingly, on the 12th July we embarked and set sail. And after having been at sea about five hours we came to an anchor; which at first extreamly surprised me. But (to my great sorrow) being inform'd it was their daily practise<sup>2</sup> (who

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the command (*farmān*) from the Pasha of Egypt, issued in the name of his sovereign, the Sultan of Turkey, already mentioned at p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Pitts had noticed this practice (see p. 20). The reason for it was, of course, the danger of sailing by night in waters crowded with reefs. Burton, who in 1853 voyaged from Suez to Yenbo in a pilgrim vessel, says: 'The ships of the

never consider the passengers' occasions, but their own pleasure and satisfaction), I was forc'd to have patience, as with the rest of my inconveniences, and discontentedly past the tedious hours with lying still, when we had the fairest, briskest gales that man could wish for. Coming to an anchor every evening, as orderly as a traveller to his inn, in so fair a season, look'd as if they did it in contempt of Providence and all oppositions that could happen on that dangerous sea in so uncertain a climate. Nor was it long before they sensibly paid for their laziness. For the third day after we set sail we met with so violent a storm as brought our maintopmast to the board and broke our mainyard, so that now distresse and horror had put on the most frightful countenance they could possibly wear, for a time. But, as Providence divinely ordered it, it lasted not long; and being within six hours' sail of a port, we luckily found there a ship laid up till the next year, which refitted us so well as to give us means of proceeding on our voyage.

Here we stay'd four days, and the 21st instant again proceeded, the wind still continuing favourable. And on the first of August we arrived at a small village called Moela [see p. 47], where we took in fresh water, and the next day departed for Jemboe [see p. 67], in the evening of which we came to an island in the middle of the Red Sea, where we were embarras'd in a greater measure than in any of our former voyage.

The Red Sea, or Mare de la Mecca, is a branch of the Indian or Æthiopian Ocean, which parts Arabia from Africa and Ægypt, running, from north to south, above twelve hundred miles. And tho' Mons. Thevenot, who, it seems, travel'd some days on its shoars, affirms it not to be above eight or nine miles over towards the north, I can certify it to be more than a hundred leagues in breadth in some parts, tho' full of sunk rocks, very dangerous to sailors, and innumerable islands; for

Red Sea—infamous region of rocks, reefs, and shoals—cruise along the coast by day, and at night lay-to in the first cove they find, they do not sail when it blows hard, and as in winter time the weather is often stormy and the light of day does not last long, the voyage is intolerably slow' (*Pilgrimage*, vol. 1, p. 195). His own ship anchored for the night whilst still in sight of Suez, and a note explains that 'in the East it is usual, when commencing a voyage or a journey, to make a short day's work, in order to be at a convenient distance for returning, in case of any essential article having been forgotten'

which and other reasons it is not much frequented since the way to the Indies was discovered by the ocean. That part of it which lyes between Boguee and<sup>1</sup> Egypt and Judda (the port of Mecca) is two days' sayle; likewise full of flatts [i.e., shoals] and rocks and some little islands, which in the winter have no inhabitants, except Seamond, which is always inhabited, and another called Sameri, inhabited by Samaritan Jews.<sup>2</sup> In the middle it is safely navigable by day or night in clear weather, being 25 or 30 fathom deep; but towards the western shoar, by reason of shoals and rocks, 'tis unnavigable by night, and abounds with great plenty of all manner of fish. The Hebrews call this sea Jamsuph or Mare Algosum.<sup>3</sup> This Red Sea will be famous to all ages, upon the account of the Children of Israel passing through it dry-footed, when they went up out of Egypt.

Here we were oblig'd to go all ashoar and pray to a saint formerly buried there, and also to present him with a shurt and light his lamps; this being accustom'd time out of mind and perform'd by all ships that pass this way; which ceremonial duty being finished, we proceeded on our voyage, much joy appearing in the faces of our company, proposing to them-

<sup>1</sup> This may be a mistake for 'in'. Cluverius, in his map of Africa, shows 'Buge' as a town on the sea coast, almost opposite to Jidda, and just north of the boundary between Egypt and Abyssinia.

<sup>2</sup> These two islands have not been traced.

<sup>3</sup> Lobo (in Le Grand, p. 42) cites St. Jerome as his authority for saying that the Jews call the Red Sea *Jam-Suf*. He goes on to explain that the first half of this term is the Hebrew for 'sea', and the second the name of an Abyssinian plant yielding a pink dye. He suggests a possible connexion between this plant and the under-sea vegetation which, he says, gives the water of the Red Sea a reddish appearance. See also Bruce (vol. II, p. 138).

Dr L. D. Barnett, C.B., F.B.A., has kindly given me the following note: 'The words in question are *Yam Sūph*. According to the 1907 edition of Gesenius' *Lexicon* (as revised by Brown, Driver, and Briggs) *sūph*, which means "reeds" or "rushes", is probably a loan-word from Egyptian *twfi*, "reeds". The combination *Yam Sūph*, "Sea of Reeds" (whence "Sea of city Suph"), which in Greek is included in the general term *θάλασσα ἑρυθρά* ("Red Sea"), is applied more often to the Gulf of Suez, and sometimes to the Gulf of Akaba. According to W. Max Müller (*Asia and Europa*, 42 f.) this name was originally given to the upper end of the Gulf of Suez (reaching to the Bitter Lakes), which is shallow and marshy, probably also reddish in colour. It may be noted that *Suph*, the place where (according to *Deut.* I, 1) Moses recited the Deuteronomic Law, is translated in the Greek Version of the Septuagint as *τῆς ἐρυθρᾶς*, to which the Greek Version of Lucian adds *θαλάσσης*, while the Vulgate gives it as *Mare Rubrum*.'

selves a certainty of good success after having paid their devotion to their saint.

But it happened quite otherwise; for we were scarcely out of sight of the saint's mansion when there arose a terrible storm, and in the most dangerous part of the sea; which was in a few minutes afterwards so violent that it drove us fast on a sunk rock. Where we continued four days, using all manner of diligence to get off, which could not be effected; and at last we were forc'd to throw over above 200 bails of goods. And as soon as we got off, she sprung a leak, which employed us three days and three nights, pumping continually. And after great diligence and hard labour, on the 10th of August we safely arrived at the harbour of Jembo.

And here, tho' I make a little digression, I think fit to insert one particular passage, which, to expose the most extraordinary roguery of our captain and pilot, is very material. For tho' the latementioned storm was very violent, yet we had not ran our ship ashoar, had not there been a mischievous design between our captain and pilot. For, our ship being full loaded before the arrival of these 100 janizaries aforementioned, which was not expected, and he being obliged to carry the goods before on board (having received freight and sign'd bills of lading), could not possibly receive these janizaries and their effects without this fraud, as follows: which was by taking out clandestinely by night the merchants' goods and putting them on board other ships in port, to make room for the last cargae. After which (the day being the 4th of August) he purposely ran the ship ashoar, and then, as endeavouring to get her off, threw over the quantity of goods before exprest of the janizaries and merchants (amongst which, to my sorrow, I had likewise a considerable share); and this being done, as soon as we arrived at Jembo delivered the rest of the goods to the factors there and at Judda, making a protest that he was forced to proceed thus by means of the violent storm running him on a shoar. When afterwards the goods he had put aboard the other ships came all safe to Judda; which this villain converted to his own use.

Jembo<sup>1</sup> is the seaport town of that famous city Medena,

<sup>1</sup> Yenbo (more generally called Yambu) is the seaport of Medina and is situated about a third of the distance down the eastern side of the Red Sea. Burton

where lyes the body of their piophet Mahomet, as hereafter shall be notified; for now, my affairs not allowing me much leasure to wait my time and observation of antiquities, understanding that five Indian ships were at Judda and ready to depart, I immediately hired a boat for the aforesaid place and, adding four janizaries to my servants, I intended to depart at midnight; which, after having embark'd my provision, we put in execution. But the Governour, having information that I was a Nazareen (or one who believed in Jesus of Nazareth), ordered a file of musqueteers at the mouth of the port to stop me. And as we were going out, accordingly the guard called me on shoar; but, pretending not to hear, I at first took no notice of it, when immediately they fired twenty musquets, wounding one of my servants, and a brace of bullets came so near my body [that they ?] shott through my coat, which lay by me. And not having any wind to further my escape, and those in the boat being terrifyed with the danger, seeing my servant bleed and knowing not how soon it might be their own case, they oblig'd me to submit and go on shoar, tho' you may suppose much against my will.

I was no sooner landed but they immediately hurried me away to the Governour; who, being retired, ordered me to be secured for that time and brought before him the next day. In which interval the soldiers debating among themselves how they should bestow me, some of them proposed to carry me to the castle; which others contradicted, saying: 'Should we carry him to the castle, if he be a spy and not hanged, he will discover our weakness; but let us carry him to a bawdy-house and make him treat.' Which accordingly they did; where with brandy and strong luscious wine made of dates, and women made like devils, we passed the night, with what satisfaction on my side you may reasonably imagine.

But at last (to bring this unlucky adventure to a period) the

(*Pilgrimage*, vol 1, p 225) gives a description of it, and says that its full name is Yanbu 'al Bahr, to distinguish it from a village of that name about 20 miles inland. Ovington's account of Yenbo will be found on p 179, below. Hamilton has nothing to say about it. Irwin, who was there in 1777, supplies a sketch plan of the town and harbour. He had an experience somewhat similar to Daniel's, for he and his companions were kept in captivity by the Governor, until an order arrived from Mecca for their release (*Adventures*, vol 1, p 23)

next morning I was carried before the Governour, attended by as many boys and girles as Witney when he went to be hang'd.<sup>1</sup> Who at my first appearance ordered me to be searched, as also my Christian servant; which proved utterly ineffectual to their hopes, I having beforehand disposed of most of my money to my janizaries; otherwise I had been effectually strip'd at once. But, to revenge this disappointment, he immediately demanded 40,000 crowns or my head; telling me he was inform'd I was a pyrat and a spy, going to joyn and give information to those of Madagascar,<sup>2</sup> who had lately taken a ship near Mocha in which he and his relations were concern'd, and now he thought he could not do himself greater justice than to have satisfaction of me. Upon which I desired leave to send for the chieftest of the janizaries, who would certifie him that I was a merchant of Cairo and not a spy (as I had been falsely accused to be) and that I embarqued at Sues with the Grand Seignour's authority. At which he was not a little surprised, saying: 'You unbeliever! Would any Mahometan passe his word for you?' But at last he permitted me to send my servant to my friends the janizaries; I ordering him to distribute several pieces of gold and several pieces of eight among them, telling them what to say. When they immediately came to my assistance; assuring the Governour I was a merchant of Grand Cairo and had paid a great deal

<sup>1</sup> James Whitney, a notorious highwayman, was executed at Smithfield on 19 Dec. 1694 (see Crook's *Newgate Calendar*, vol. II, p. 95).

<sup>2</sup> The troubles caused during the last quarter of the seventeenth century by the depredations of European pirates (mainly English) in Indian waters are narrated in Sir Jadunath Sarkar's *Short Life of Aurangzib* (p. 412), Gosse's *History of Piracy* (pp. 178-81), Anderson's *Western India* (pp. 121-3), and Wright's *Annals* (p. 155). One of the most notorious of these pirates, John Avery, after making several captures in the Gulf of Aden, took, in September 1695, off Socotra, a richly laden Indian ship, and off the Indian coast plundered a vessel, belonging to the Emperor Aurangzib, engaged in the pilgrim traffic to the Red Sea. Both vessels hailed from Surat, and an outburst of popular fury at that port led to the imprisonment of the English President and the other members of the factory. An attempt by Avery to establish a base on the island of Pem, at the mouth of the Red Sea, was foiled by the lack of water; but he found a secure and handy refuge at the island of St. Mary, on the north-east coast of Madagascar. The Muslims of Arabia and India alike were not only outraged by the depredations on their shipping and the interference with the pilgrim traffic, but were also very sensitive about the entrance of European vessels into the Red Sea, as endangering the safety of their holy places. The accusation made against Daniel of spying for the Madagascar pirates was accordingly a very serious matter.



of money for custom to the Grand Seignour, and was now going upon my lawful business. Yet after a long debate, and although I had all the favour imaginable, I was forced to make a present to the Governour of 100 Venetian chequeens [i.e. sequins], and also as many among his officers;<sup>1</sup> besides a present of rice, honey, sugar, coffee, and tobacco for his wives and slaves; besides the loss of my boat hire (which was paid before). And glad I came off so; this being the chief city of the Banioquebys or Bengebres,<sup>2</sup> formerly called Sarazeens,<sup>3</sup> from Sarah, the wife of Abraham; but my opinion is they derive their names from *sara*, which in the Arabean tongue signifies a desert, or *sarake*, which signifies robbery; whose principal maintenance consists in plundering passengers, claiming a privilege to demand Ishmael's right from the sons of Isaac; being very numerous, and able in 24 hours to get together a head of 50,000 men. A singular specimen of their power and rapine being demonstrated to me very soon after; for I had not paid my awarded imposition money above four hours, and retired with the janizaries, but there arrived an express to the Governour from his brother, to the great joy of the people of that town, with the news of their having robbed and destroyed the whole caravan of pilgrims and merchants in their return from Mecca to Damascus and other parts of Asia, consisting of 70,000 men; giving an account (with joy) how they had barbarously murdered those that resisted, stript the rest stark naked in that wild, scorching, and intollerable desert, and most savagely forced their women away with them, being deaf to their imploring complaints and remediless tears. The number of these unnatural villains were computed to be about 100,000.

Upon which news, being not the welcomest to one in my circumstances (who might have been necessitated in this my dangerous expedition to meet with the same distress) my janizaries began to fear as well as myself. We immediately embarked, and two days after set sail for Judda, where, after an indifferent good passage, we arrived the 29th of August; but

<sup>1</sup> In his account (p. 86) he appears to have charged only one of these payments.

<sup>2</sup> *Banī 'Uqba* or *Banī Gabīr*.

<sup>3</sup> The name 'Saracen' is often said to be derived from *sharqīyīn* (i e. Easterners), but the *Oxford Eng. Dict.* does not accept this.

where, to the compleating my considerable disappointments, I found the Indian ships departed three days before.

However, going to Haggi Usaph [Haji Asaf], a Turk to whom I was recommended, and desiring his advice, he gave me fresh hopes of overtaking the ships, they sometimes using to water and take in fresh provisions and coffee in the country [of?] Yemen. Having this encouragement, the next day I hired a vessel and departed for Yemen [see p. 73]; where being arrived, I understood they were past by for Mocha two days before. But still flattering myself with hopes of overtaking them, I presently [i.e. immediately] hired dromedaries and set forward that night, after having (as I imagined) thoroughly satisfied the Governour of that place (who took from me twenty pieces of eight and two strings of coral of a considerable value [see p. 86], as a *cafar*<sup>1</sup> or passage money) and then departed. But (by what means I know not) he had information that I was a Frank [and] sent immediately four horsemen after me to bring me back again; which, although with all reluctancy and discontent it's possible to conceive for being hindred in this extraordinary juncture, I was forced to obey. And after several debates between the Governour and my friend, I was obliged to make him a present of 100 pieces of eight, [and] so once more got my liberty, tho', if I had had leisure to have made my case known to the King, he had been severely reprimanded and I had recovered my money again. But the concern of the dispatch of my affairs being more considerable with me, I contented myself with the loss and went onward with all speed imaginable, and arrived at Mocha the 13th of September; where I had hopes, if I did not find the Indian ships, at least to have had the conveyance of some European vessel, as Consul Fleetwood assured me. But on the contrary, as if Fortune had now resolved to dash all my hopes at once and plunge me into the gulph of despair, I found not only all the ships departed but also all the Franks, except one illiterate German doctor, whose nonsense added more to the disturbance of my mind.

<sup>1</sup> Thévenot (vol. ii, p. 514), who had to pay 'caffarre' when journeying from Suez to Tor, explains its meaning as 'ce qui se paie pour se racheter de quelque chose, comme ce qu'on paie aux Arabes en qualité de caffare [*sic*] est afin de n'en être point volé.' Mr. Beckingham thinks that the Arabic original may be *kaffāra*, which is used in the Qur'ān in the sense of something done to expiate a sin.

My humour at this crisis (for to think I should, through so many difficulties, get so near my designed place and yet not able, with my utmost endeavour, to compass it) fermented me to the extreamest vexation and trouble; offering any money for a conveyance but found it impossible. So that now I was totally driven to this exigent—either to stay there till next year and be a prey to those barbarous savages, or unfortunately return, not being able to finish the purport of my engagement. But however, reflecting that chance and accident are not in human power to evade, and also being not conscious to myself of any remissness in my endeavours, I resolved to smother my discontent as well as I could and contrive the best method, after my misfortune, to further my return.

But before I endeavoured to bring this resolution to effect, I consulted with a rich banian,<sup>1</sup> who frequently did business for the Europeans, to try if there was yet left any probability of proceeding. But upon conference between us and comparing things together which might reasonably conduce to my advantage, in conclusion [he] gave me but slight encouragement; tho' his brother, who was a great trader between Mocha and Muscat (and in few days bound thither), assured me that it was very likely for me to find a conveyance there for Surrat. But having been already so often deceived, my hopes were grown so cold, and myself indeed so inclin'd to doubt the truth of that new enterprise, [he] could not persuade me to venture with him. And to lye still where I was till next year, amidst so many various accidents and dangers (especially it being so much later than my time prefixt to the Honourable Committee) I knew could not turn to account. So, making him a present of cloath, sugar, and rice, I gave him my letters, which he promised me he would forward per first conveyance for Surrat.

And I, with my same dromedarys, returned to Yemen. Where, upon my arrival, making a new address and compliment to the Governour, telling him my misfortune and shewing him the Bashaw of Mocha's letter (who was his superiour), his surly Excellency was pleased to treat me somewhat more civilly than before.

<sup>1</sup> Banyan (Hindu trader).

Yemen<sup>1</sup> is a small village, but seaport of the city Cellebee,<sup>2</sup> from whence is exported all the coffee which supplies Europe by way of Sues and Grand Cairo, as Mocha is the seaport town of Bideilfokee,<sup>3</sup> whence comes all the coffee which supplies India, and Europe by way of the Cape. And during my stay here, being (to my sorrow) too well acquainted with the Governour, his secretary assured me there was that year exported 40,000 bails for Judda. And on the vessel [in] which I embarked was 1400 bails; being one of the largest vessels of that fashion in that sea; her keel, beams, planks, and rudder being sowed and tyed together and then pitched, not having one nail or piece of iron in her; her sails being made of date leaves, matted or pleated together, and ornamented with ostriches eggs and feathers, and the vessel's stern very prettily painted.

So on the 21st of September I embarked in the aforesaid vessel for Judda, with a fair wind, which continued only in our favour twelve hours; when arose the usual north-west wind, with that violence which soon disordered our date leaves and left us to Divine Providence. But accidentally having another small sail, we put before the wind and came to an anchor near the island of Comaran.<sup>4</sup> Where we were no sooner arrived but were welcomed with dreadful thunder and lightning continually flashing, and rain pouring from the clouds, not by drops but by streams; which we were forced to endure four days and four nights; which caused many of our men to dye of the bloody flux;<sup>5</sup> not having anything to cover our heads but the canopy of heaven.

On the 26th it pleased God our contrary wind and rain

<sup>1</sup> Daniel's memory appears to have played him a strange trick. There is not (and, so far as I can discover, there never was) a port of this name. He must surely mean either Hodeida (about 110 miles north of Mocha) or Luhaiya (about 70 miles north of Hodeida). From Ovington's statements (see p. 177) that the coffee trade of Mocha had recently been transferred in great measure to Luhaiya, and that the Governor of the latter place ruled over the whole district, including Hodeida, I conclude that by 'Yemen' Daniel really meant Luhaiya.

<sup>2</sup> Zabid, about 52 miles south-east of Hodeida, had once been a centre of the coffee trade. Varthema (p. 81) speaks of it (probably with some exaggeration) as 'a large and very excellent city', but in Daniel's time it was of little or no importance.

<sup>3</sup> Bait-al-Faqih, about 30 miles south-east of Hodeida

<sup>4</sup> Kamaran (see p. 177).

<sup>5</sup> Dysentery.

ceased, the elements favouring us to our hearts' content. We refitted us with a new sail, and departed once more for Judda; where we arrived the 4th of October.

But here again I found a new addition to my misfortunes, being obliged to remain 50 days<sup>1</sup> for a conveyance towards the Levant. During which time the disagreeableness of the climate and country, the morosness, barbarity, and treachery of the natives, my own melancholly, being alone among so abominable a crew, who I was forced to keep company with, and humor too, being in danger every minute of an outrage upon their taking the least pique against me, may well be imagined by any that have the least insight into my then deplorable condition. Being an eye-witness how the Grand Sheriffo<sup>2</sup> treated the Grand Seignour's Bashaw, he coming in person before the city, accompanied with 2,000 horse and demanded of the Bashaw (who was my only friend) 100,000 chiqueens; adding that his master, the Grand Seignour, was the son of a Christian whore, and he would not own him to be a protector of the Mahometan religion (since he had made a peace with those unbelievers, the Christians), but that he would marry his daughter to the King of Morocco. Upon which the Bashaw was forced to send him the money to save his head; and I, very melancholly, returned to my lodging.

But Heaven had still an eye of pity towards me; for few days after<sup>3</sup> I was favoured with the arrival of a vessel from Abys,<sup>4</sup> on the coast of Ethiopia, on board of whom was a Frenchman, who had been sent, with a Jesuit as an interpreter, to the King of Abyssinia; which Jesuit dyed, leaving him to return to the court of France to give an account of his expedition and proceedings. This welcome Frenchman, during my stay there, was very divertive to me with the discourse of his travels and relation of several noted places; amongst which this description following of the ancient and famous river Nilus was, in my opinion, as grateful to be heard as it is wonderful in its nature.

<sup>1</sup> Really it was two months (see p. 76).

<sup>2</sup> The Sharif of Mecca, who, though nominally a vassal of the Turkish Sultan, was practically independent. For his raid on the town see also Poncet's account (p. 158).

<sup>3</sup> Poncet reached Judda before the Sharif.

<sup>4</sup> Abyssinia (Arabic *Habash*). Daniel seems to have thought of it as a part of Ethiopia. The port from which Poncet had come was Massawa.

As to the original and rise of this great African river there are different judgments. Some will have its beginning to be in the Upper Ethiopia, in the kingdom of the Abysses, from very high mountains which are called the Mountains of the Moon; but our modern opinions agree (more reasonable) that the Nile is formed from the increase of two lakes, called Zembree<sup>1</sup> and Zaflan, which are filled by rain falling into them from precipices. And for several days' journey (as my traveller said) he observed himself the source of water is heard roaring through caverns underground a great way off before it is seen to enter these lakes. And in one particular relating to this wonderful river I myself can declare that, as other writers affirm its evacuation into the Mediterranean to be by five or seven streams, that it only flows but from two, which form the figure of the Greek [letter] delta; the eastern branch falling into the Mediterranean at Damietta and the western near Roset[ta]; both which I passed, going and returning, with great satisfaction and pleasure, the banks all along being delicately beautified with villages, having between Grand Cairo and Roset above five hundred.

There is no genius of the Egyptians happy enough to extol properly the extraordinary effects and blessings proceeding from this Nilus, which makes the fertility of the whole kingdom of Egypt; beginning every year to flow in the month of June and swelling sometimes to four and twenty cubits; which overflows their whole country about the middle of August and decreases about the middle of September; and in October they cultivate and sow their ground, and in April following reap their harvest, without half the trouble of our northern fatigues. Nor do the Egyptians owe only their food, but in great measure their lives too, to the flowing of this river; it being observed that when five hundred dye of the plague at Grand Cairo the day before, not one dyes after the day it [i.e. the river] begins to encrease; but more especially after the Feast of St John [i.e. 24 June], which, although the plague has raged violently several weeks before, has been observed to cease on that day.

<sup>1</sup> Cluverius (p. 132) mentions 'Zembre' as an alternative name for what is evidently Lake Tana. Poncet's own account is very different from Daniel's.

The waters are sweet and grateful to the taste, cool, wholesome, and very nourishing, both to plants and animals. It abounds with great plenty of fish, but not very wholesome, the bottom being muddy (not having any gravel or stones) and very much invested [infested] with crocodils, that are very pernicious, some of them having been taken thirty foot in length.

During the inundation or overflowing of the Nile the country people keep their cattle on the tops of the hills until the decrease of the waters; their towns and villages appearing in the time of the flood like so many little islands; holding a commerce by a continual intercourse of boats and shallows, in which they transport their marketable commodities.

'Tis generally noted amongst the natives that, if the river does not overflow, 'tis not only a forerunner of plague and famine but prognosticates some ensuing mischief to the Prince and State, as is confirm'd by the testimony of good and credible authors. And in the year 1688 I was an eye-witness of its effects, being then in the Holy Land, where many families came for refuge from the plague, which the not flowing of the river the year before foretold.

With such and other diverting narrations my new French friend obliged me, with passing our time away as well as we could. And upon the 8th of December I embarked in a galley for Sues, leaving my friend, who was obliged to stay some time longer; and after an indifferent good passage [I] arrived at Jembo. The commander of our vessel was formerly a Greek, and, having kill'd two Turks, he was forc'd to turn Mahometan. There was nothing considerable happen'd during this passage, nor was it deterred by any ill accidents.

Here we were forced to go on shoar and remain some time, our captain having private business at Medena, but chiefly to buy from the robbers some stolen goods of the pilgrims beforementioned.

Medena is one of the chiefest city [cities] of Arabia Petrea, and is very considerable among the Mahometans, the body of their famous prophet Mahomet being there deposited; which some say<sup>1</sup> was removed hither from Mecca after Albukerk,

<sup>1</sup> Wrongly, of course.

General of the Portuguese, attempted to take it thence and surprise the town of Judda to favour his retreat <sup>1</sup> But other of his proselytes, who were more zealous, will have it that Mahomet himself desired to be buried there, to be revenged on the incredulous people of Mecca (which was the place of his birth) for banishing him and despising his doctrine when he first set up to be a prophet This city is only four days' journey from Mecca, and stands upon a small river, call'd Lokie <sup>2</sup> The houses are very low, except those inhabited by the dervisees and other religious Mahometans, who are much venerated by the Turks for their pretended sanctity and skill in the Alcoran. The chief mosque is called Mosque Akiba, <sup>3</sup> which signifies 'most holy' It is supported by four hundred pillars and adorned with three thousand silver lamps <sup>4</sup> And there is within this mosque, at the east end, a small chappel, glittering with plates of silver, in which stands Mahomet's coffin, covered with cloath of gold, under a very rich canopy, which the Bashaw of Egypt renews yearly by the Grand Seignour's ordres <sup>5</sup> 'Tis commonly reported that his coffin was iron and it hung suspended in the air by two loadstones, [this] being fabulous and of no credit, the ridiculous assestion only of such who would impose on the ignorant with their travelling authority, for it is supported by two black marble pillars, of fifteen foot high, which is surrounded with a baluster [i.e. balustrade] of silver, on which hang a great number of silver lamps, whose smoak and heighth (being very high) render the place obscure and the black marble pillars invisible The Turks are obliged, by an article of their religion, to visit this mosque once in their lifetime, but yet there are but few that strictly observe it, beside the common

<sup>1</sup> For Albuquerque's expedition to the Red Sea in 1513 see his biography by H. M. Stephens, p. 128, and Dames's *Barbosa*, vol. 1, pp. 49, 52, 57. After an unsuccessful attempt to storm Aden, the Portuguese went on to Judda, but found that the town had been so strongly fortified that an attack was inadvisable.

<sup>2</sup> This probably represents Al 'Aqiq. Philby (p. 50) describes the Wadi 'Aqiq as 'the chief drainage line of the Madina basin'.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Arberry says this is the *Masjid al-Aqaba* (after a place name), and refers to Muir's *Life of Mohammod*, p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> On this exaggeration see pp. 4, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Burckhardt, with his usual accuracy, asserts that a new curtain is sent when the old one is decayed, or when a new Sultan ascends the throne, and those authors err who, like Maundrell [and Daniel], declare the curtain to be removed every year (Buxton, vol. 1, p. 321 n).



people, the muftis absolving the richer sort from that obligation. The other four articles are: first, to observe cleanness in the outward parts of their bodies and garments: secondly, to make prayers five times a day; thirdly, to observe their *Ramazan* or fasts; and fourthly, to perform faithfully the Zeckat [*zakāt*], or giving alms. All Christians are forbid, upon pain of death, to come within fifteen leagues of this place.

All this my captain at his return gave me an account of. And not only of this, but the more renowned city of Mecca, which is the greatest and most frequented of all Mahometan mosques, it standing in the midst of the city and being conspicuous at a great distance by its roof, which is raised in the fashion of a dome, with two towers of extraordinary height and architecture. It has above a hundred gates, each having a window over it. The plan of the mosque has a descent of twelve steps, which the zealous here account to be holy; they alledging that Abraham built his first house there, but more especially that it is the place of Mahomet's birth. This mosque is adorn'd with rich tapestry and gildings and fine inscriptions. And a certain particular place at the east corner of the mosque there is, which has no roof and is supposed and fancy'd by them to enclose the space where Abraham's house stood.<sup>1</sup> The entrance into it is by a door of silver, of the height of a man; on one side of which there is a fountain,<sup>2</sup> whose water is salt and believed by the superstitious Mahometans to have the vertue of washing away their sins.

They solemnize a festival here once a year, being on the three and twentieth of May;<sup>3</sup> where meet four caravans—one from Egypt on [and?] the coast of Barbary, another from Constantinople, one from Persia, and the fourth from the countrey of Yemen; which meeting there together are computed to be near 400,000 souls, who come there as pilgrims and under pretence of religion, but merchandising is their chieftest business, each caravan bringing the commodities and product of their respective countries, which they barter one with another, this

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the *Ka'ba*, which, however, has a roof.

<sup>2</sup> The well *Zamzam*.

<sup>3</sup> Owing to the difference in the calendars it is impossible that a Muslim festival should fall each year on a fixed date of the Christian year.

fair during [i.e. lasting] twenty days, at which time the der-visees are wholly employ'd in distributing and selling that holy water to the ignorant people

With this and several other stories of the most talked of antiquities my captain entertain'd me with, when we were got again on board, which was on the 5th of January. Then [we] sailed again for a village called Sharne,<sup>1</sup> which, although not above two hundred leagues distant from Yembo, yet, the wind being contrary and the elements not disposed to favour us, we did not arrive there till the 12th of March.

'Twas here, although in another kind than those already past, where I was sensible of one of the greatest strokes of Fortune. Our provision being spent and our flour [flour], which was the only substantial thing we had to depend upon, with the dampness, length of time, and ill management, it began to move of itself, agitated by the numerous living creatures it had given birth too. So that we were ten days at least from Mount Sinai, which was the next [i.e. nearest] place I could receive relief. Where I resolved to go, chusing rather to run the hazard of being murdered by the Arabs than be starved or drowned in our miserable galley, which at that time leaked very much and obliged us with uncessant labour to pump night and day, besides a difference between captain, pilot, and sailors.

The first thing I had to do after my landing, I immediately made love to one of the chiefest rogues of that country to supply me with cammels and conduct me to Mount Sinai. An admirable place for any humane or civilized person to be in, a villain being to be courted here as most proper to manage your business, honesty and conscience in this part of the world being unnecessary things, not known or heard of.

So I and my rogue, after having agreed, set forward for Mount Sinai. In which journey we were extremely fatigued, meeting with a disappointment in our way, finding our passage stopt up by reason of an earthquake, which had thrown down a mountain, which caused us to go two days about, and

<sup>1</sup> SHERM in Egyptian Arabic means 'an inlet'. The reference in the text is to a small harbour on the eastern side of Ras Muhammad. The western part of the bay is called SHERM SHAIAH, the eastern SHERM AL MOIYA. 'Mt Sinai can be reached in 2½ days by a comparatively good road from the west shore of the bay' (*Red Sea Pilot*, p. 185). This road is shown on the map in Burckhardt's *Syria*.

extream sultrey weather, the danger of every hour falling a prey to the barbarous Arabs, and no security for my throat's not being cut at the first opportunity by my honest guide and his companions I had taken with me. Yet, by the protection of the Almighty Providence, I at last arrived at that holy place, Mount Sinai. Where, having now a little more leisure then at my first setting out, two or three days after, having refreshed myself and recovered my sight, which was contracted so narrow at my first arrival, that I could not read one word of an Italian gazet [newspaper: Ital. *gazzetta*] which the Greek Patriark shewed me for European news, I had the opportunity to visit the rarities and reliques of that renowned mountain; which (to the best of my memory) I have set down as was related to me.<sup>1</sup>

Zinai or Sinai is a mountain of Arabia Petrea (in [or?] the Stony Arabia), two days' journey from the shoar of the Red Sea; of which Mount Horeb is a part. This, as ancient authors generally agree and as my interpreter told me, was the twelfth station of the Israelites in their passage to the Holy Land; about which mountains they wandered near a year, which was during that time wherein all those things happened which are mentioned in the Scripture, from the 19 chapter of Exodus to the end of the whole book of Leviticus and in Numbers from the beginning to the 10th chapter; the chiefest of all which was the Allmighties giving the Law in person there to Moses.

The Mahometans call this mountain Gibel Mousa [*Jabal Mūsā*] or the Mountain of Moses.<sup>2</sup> It's formed of the union of three mountaines, as it were, one standing on the top of the other; and had formerly many chappels upon it. Several yet remaining, served by fourteen hundred hermits; amongst which are three famous on account of two sons of a king of Ethiopia, who led retired lives there for above forty years. As also of the famous convent called Drei,<sup>3</sup> which was very strong

<sup>1</sup> An excellent account of the monastery and its neighbourhood in 1816 will be found in Burckhardt's *Syria*, p. 541.

<sup>2</sup> There is some disagreement as to the nomenclature of the various peaks of the mountain mass. Longmans' *Gazetteer* says that Mt. Sinai is usually identified with *Jabal Mūsā*, one of a cluster of mountains of which Mt. Horeb forms a part of the northern end, those being two peaks of a mountain known generally as Mt. Catherine. Others regard Mt. Serbal, which lies to the north-west of Mt. Catherine, as the true Sinai. But see Mr. Letts's note at p. 144 of *Von Harff*.

<sup>3</sup> The well-known monastery of St. Catherine of Alexandria. The depression

and rich, the walls of which [are] not inferiour to the Tower of London, all pilgrims which come there being drawn up by a pulley, tearing very much the insult of the Arabs. From which convent pilgrims go up to the top of the mountain by fourteen hundred steps, cut out in the rock by the order and at the charge of St Helena.<sup>1</sup>

At some distance from the foot of this mountain there still runs that excellent spring of water which gushed out of the rock when Moses struck it at the murmuring of the Children of Israel.<sup>2</sup> And at the third part of the way are two gates, shut, and not to be opened to the pilgrims until they have made their confession, which I did, among the rest of the blockheads, to the ignorant fryer, and then, the gates being opened, [I was] permitted to pass. Somewhat higher than this is a great stone, which an angel (as 'tis said) laid there to hinder the passage of Elias. On the top of the mountain, under a great hollow rock, opening towards the west, is the place where Moses lived during the forty days that he was upon the mount. A little beyond this rock, going upwards towards the right, there is a Greek church, dedicated to St Katharine, and on the backside of that a French church, dedicated to the Ascension of Our Lord. Five or six paces further, and over against this church, there is another cave, open to the east, into which they go down by eleven steps, where Moses received the tables of the Law, and desired to see God's face. The Arabians likewise have a mosque<sup>3</sup> there, where they often come and pray to God, Mahomet, Moses, and St Katharine.

So, having remain'd here all night, the next morning we went and visited the monastery of the Forty Martyrs,<sup>4</sup> which is in the valley between Mount Horeb and Mount Sinai, where there is a fair church and most delicious garden, with all sorts of fruit

in which it is situated is known as the Wādī al-Dan, or valley of the monastery (*Encyclo Brit*)

<sup>1</sup> On the number of steps, the estimates of which vary widely, see Von Harff, p. 145. The story that they were constructed by the Empress Helena is now discredited (Baedeker, p. 205).

<sup>2</sup> See Gibson, p. 50, and Von Harff, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> The chapel and the mosque are still standing (see Baedeker, p. 205).

<sup>4</sup> These martyrs were monks slain by the Saracens. The building is still in existence, but only two or three monks reside there occasionally, to look after the garden.

trees and flowers, a spring running through the middle of it; it being the more delightful there not being any other garden, great trees, or water within ten days' journey of it. As also the Grotto of St Onufreous,<sup>1</sup> cut out in the rock, and many other curiosities too tedious to insert; the sight of which I had been much better entertain'd with, had my own more substantial affairs but answered my expectation.

But however, I past my time here for twelve days; after which the Patriarch gave me a pass to his *caffargees*,<sup>2</sup> and also some necessary provision for my journey to Cairo, and a promise of his daily prayers for me, my friends and relations. It being a venerable custome among the Greek pilgrims that come there to give five crowns for themselves or any other persons for whom they have the greatest love and care, to use their interest with God Almighty and procure them a good place in Heaven, I presented them with forty crowns and two pair of spectacles, to pray for King William, the Honourable East India Company, myself, and relations.

At the finishing of this, having receiv'd for my money all the blessings he could bestow upon me, I departed from Mount Sinai to Grand Cairo, which is ten days' journey. After the trouble of passing which, (as another fatal addition to my afflictions) at my arrival at Cairo<sup>3</sup> I found that city and country round terribly infected with the plague; which, being now (to my sorrow) present an eye-witness of, serves me to confirm the mortality (mention'd by me before) in the year 1618. It was so raging now that all the Europeans, as English, French, Dutch, and Venetians, were close shut up, having laid in their provisions at the beginning of the plague, and keeping no communication with the people of the town. However, I went to visit the English Consul; who at first would not permit me in their company, but after some debate among themselves, seeing me so poor and disconsolate, had compassion to admit me. But not unless I would come into their house as I did into the world, naked; which I consented to, soon stripping myself of my habit

<sup>1</sup> 'In the upper part of the garden rises a spring, with a grotto near it which is said once to have been occupied by St. Onofrius' (Baedeker, p. 208). See also Von Harff, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> This word has not been traced, but it appears to mean the persons entitled to levy 'cafar' (see p. 71).

<sup>3</sup> On 8 April (see p. 83).

(which I was the more willing to do, it being very miserable, not having any shoes or stockings); after which, washing myself with some water and vinegar, Consul Fleetwood furnished me with other clothes, and with a great deal of humanity entertained me, expressing a great concern for my disappointments and making me, at the most doleful time of death and sorrow, as welcome as possibly he could.

'Tis not to be doubted but here I had a great number of melancholy reflections, not knowing how soon it might be my own case and that the holes that I daily and perpetually saw digging for others might perhaps have in them, in a very few minutes, a spare place for myself; numbers there being well in the morning and dead at night, and the horrid disease daily encreasing so violently that during my stay (which was but twelve days) there dyed above 40,000. So that I think I need not insert how uneasy I was till I could get a conveyance for Europe; which at last I effected, and upon the 20th of April I hired a boat and departed for Alexandria, and arrived there the 25th, and embarked on board of a French ship for Marseilles; which, before my going aboard, I had heard so very ill an account of that, had I not been surrounded by death and extream distress, and there also being no other means of conveyance, I would have almost undergone any hardship rather than have submitted myself to the captain's conduct or protection; this being that person who so barbarously murdered Captain Hicks at Tunis. But, to do him justice, I found great civility from him, [he] using me, all the time I was on board, with all the courtesy imaginable.

And in twenty-five days (thanks be to God) we safely arrived at Marseilles; but no sooner came to an anchor than unkind Fortune was ready to teach me another of her unpleasant games before she designed to divert me with the pastimes of Europe. It being presently known I came from the Levant, where the plague was raging, I was obliged to undergo a severe quarantine of forty days ashoar, and our ship seventy. But during my imprisonment, having good friends in the city, as one Mr Daniel Solicoffre and Messrs. Lamb & Basket, with whom I had formerly lived, and to whom I shall ever own a great acknowledgment of their generous favours.

During this time of my quaranteen I made bold to acquaint the Honourable Company with my safe arrival and return. And here happened indeed the most considerable occurrence that had befel me through all the strange adventures in my whole expedition; for, by some answers received to letters I wrote to my friends, I heard, to my extraordinary surprise and amazement, that, by being imprisoned and hind'red by the Arabs in the port of Jembo, Almighty Providence had protected me from being drown'd with the Mocha fleet; they being all cast away, and I missing to be with them but only by three days; which was the very time that I was stop'd by the barbarous Governour beforemention'd and the rest of his (to me fortunate) retinue. So that saving of my life was, however, some comfort to me when I reflected on it, tho' I had must by that conveyance the dispatch of my affairs.

And thus, as far as my memory will give me leave or my minute-journal (which I briefly took from time to time) could assist me in, I have given the Most Honourable Committee a true and faithful account of all the memorable places, accidents, hardships, and hinderances throughout this my dangerous enterprise and painful fatigue of travelling those remote parts amongst so savage a people, where variety of misery must be every day undergone with patience. Tho' the inclemency of the elements at sea are not to be slightly, neither, to be regarded; of which (as well as at shoar) I may truly and sincerely affirm I have frequently made very solid and considerable tryal. Yet to doe my worthy patrons service, who did me the honour to put a trust in me of so eminent a nature, and as far as lay in humane ability I proceeded in with the utmost integrity, vigor, and resolution. And since it hath pleased God to preserve me through so many apparent and imminent dangers, I am not only willing but ready to make a second effort, in any post they shall think proper to effect their own business by, and give the honour of employment to one who shall put his life into the balance to equal any trust or favour which they shall, in their wisdoms, think fit to propose. Nor shall any enterprise, tho' never so foreign or hazardous, abate the fervour of that resolution which is in my heart to serve them, and which my strength and constitution (now sufficiently seasoned

by this expedition) I bless God is well enough now able to perform.

I could have drawn this account to a much longer matter, but I desire to avoid being tedious. So that having nothing worth mentioning to insert, after my getting out of prison at Marseilles, but a small tour I made in Italy for my diversion, to recruit myself after having been half starved in the miserable desarts, and on the 14th of November I departed from Marseilles for England, and arrived the 21th of December 1701.

*F I N I S .*



# DANIEL'S ACCOUNT OF HIS EXPENSES<sup>1</sup>

(*India Office Records: Court Minutes, vol. 38, f. 406.*)

An accompt of what I laid out in travelling charges for myself and servants, my losses, avenees,<sup>2</sup> presents etc., from London to Mocha, on my intended voyage to Surrat.

From London to Marseille (at the King's post rate)	£40. 05 <sup>s</sup> . 00 <sup>d</sup>
From Marseille to Legorne	£10. 18. —
From Legorne to Alexandre	£35. — —
From Alexandre to Cairo	£12. 10. —
From Cairo to Sues, with provisions for six months	£50. — —
From Sues to Joada [Jidda]	£30. — —
From Joada to Yemin	£16. — —
From Yemin to Mocha	£10. — —
Avenees at Yemboe	£50. — —
To the janizarie, my security	£50. 00. 00
Loss of boathire	£10. — —
By loss, being shipwreckt	£30. — —
Curing my servant (being wounded)	£10. — —
Taken by the Governour of Yemin in corral beads	£30. — —
Presents to severall governours, at Cairo, etc.	£60. — —
	<hr/> £444. 13. 0 <hr/>

<sup>1</sup> It is evident that the statement here copied was quite a rough one, for (1) in all but three cases the items are given in round figures; (2) in at least one instance (see p. 70) a payment mentioned in the narrative is not brought to account; and (3) no charge is made for any expenses incurred between Marseilles and London on the return journey. Apparently Daniel kept no detailed account of his expenditure, and, when asked for particulars, made up the present statement as best he could. Evidently his total outlay during the expedition was far higher than is here stated.

The errors in the spelling of place-names may fairly be attributed to the Company's secretary.

<sup>2</sup> *Arania* (Italian for 'wrong' or 'insult') was the term usually applied in the Levant to unwarranted exactions, especially by officials.

An accompt of mine and my servants' travelling charges from Mocha back to Marseille.

From Mocha to Yemin	£10. 00. 00
From Yemin to Joada	£20. — —
From Joada to Sues	£60. — —
From Sues to Cairo	£10. — —
From Cairo to Marseille and in quarantain 25 [ <i>six</i> ] dayes	£60. — —
	<hr/> £160. — — <hr/>

I do hereby sincerely declare that it cost me of my own money, over and above the three hundred pounds allowed and paid me by the Honourable Company, in my outward bound voyage to my arrivall at Mocha, one hundred and forty pounds; and further, it cost me of my own money one hundred and sixty pounds coming back from Mocha to Marseille. In all, three hundred pounds more than I received of the Honourable Company.

In witness of the truth hereof I do hereto set my hand.

WILLIAM DANIEL.

London, the 2d April 1702.



III

A NARRATIVE BY  
CHARLES JACQUES PONCET  
OF HIS JOURNEY FROM  
CAIRO INTO ABYSSINIA  
AND BACK  
1698-1701



A  
V O Y A G E  
T O  
Æ T H I O P I A,

M A D E

In the Year 1698, 1699, and 1700.

D E S C R I B I N G

Particularly that Famous Empire,  
likewise the Kingdoms of DONGOLA,  
SENNAR, part of EGYPT, &c.

W I T H

*The Natural History of those Parts.*

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*By Monsieur PONCET, M. D.*

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*Faithfully Translated from the French Original.*

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L O N D O N,

Printed for W. LEWIS at the 'Dolphin',  
next Tom's Coffee-House in Russel-  
street, Govent-Garden, 1709.



## A VOYAGE TO ÆTHIOPIA in the year[s] 1698, 1699, and 1700.

**I** SET out from Cair[o], the metropolis of Egypt, on the 10th of June<sup>1</sup> of the year 1698, in company of Hagı Ali, an officer of the Emperour of Æthiopia, and Father Charles Francis Xaverius De Brevedent, missionary of the Jesuits We imbark'd upon the Nile at Boulack, which is half a league distant from that city. The waters being low and our pilots very unskilful, we spent fifteen days before we reach'd Manfelou,<sup>2</sup> altho', when the river is high and with a favourable gale, that journey is usually made in five days

Manfelou is a town of the Higher Egypt, famous for the traffick of linen cloth The Grand Signior keeps a garrison there of 500 janisaries and 200 spahi's,<sup>3</sup> to hinder the excursion<sup>4</sup> of the Arabians, who ravage all that country

The rendezvous of the caravans of Sennar and Æthiopia is at Ibnah,<sup>5</sup> half a league above Manfelou We encamp'd in that village, to wait till all the caravan was assembled, and we continu'd for above three months under our tents, in which we suffer'd much, for the heats of that country are insupportable, especially to Europeans, who are not accusom'd to them The sun is so burning hot that from ten a clock in the morning to the evening we cou'd scarce draw breath

After having purchas'd camels and made our necessary provisions for the passing the desarts of Libya, we quitted that unpleasant abode on September the 24th about three a clock in the afternoon, and we took up our lodging at about a league and a half distance on the eastern bank of the Nile, in a place call'd Cantara,<sup>6</sup> where we were oblig'd to take up our quarters

<sup>1</sup> Poncet, being a Frenchman, uses the reformed calendar, and his dates are therefore ten days in advance of the current English reckoning

<sup>2</sup> Manfalut, a town on the western bank of the Nile, about 215 miles south of Cairo and 17 north of Asyut

<sup>3</sup> Turkish cavalry

<sup>4</sup> Lockman has 'incursions'

<sup>5</sup> Lockman gives the name as Ibnali The place has not been traced

<sup>6</sup> Bruce says (vol III, p 488), apparently with justice, that Poncet was mistaken as regards the stream they crossed 'Cantara' merely represents the Arabic for 'bridge' and refers to the structure mentioned below This bridge (still in existence) spans, not the main river, but an aqueduct constructed to convey water from the Nile to the old city which was the predecessor of Asyut



for some days, in expectation of the merchants of Girge<sup>1</sup> and of Syout [Asyût], who were not then arriv'd.

A relation of the King of Sennar invited me to go to Syout, and sent me an Arabian horse. I pass'd over the Nile upon a very large bridge, built with fair stone.<sup>2</sup> I am perswaded that 'tis the only bridge upon this river, and I got to the town in four hours' time. I beheld the ruins of an ancient and magnificent amphitheater, with some mausoleums of the ancient Romans. The town of Syout is encompass'd with delicious gardens and fair palm trees, which bear the best dates of all Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

Having at my return found all the company met, we set forward on the 2d of October early in the morning; and from that very day we enter'd a frightful desert. These deserts are extremely dangerous, because the sands, being moving, are rais'd by the least wind; which darken the air, and, falling afterwards in clouds [*en forme de pluie*], passengers are often buried in them, or at least lose the route which they ought to keep.

They observe great order in the marches of the caravans. Besides the commander, who is to decide all disputes and differences that shall arise, there are certain guides who march at the head of the caravans and who give the signal both for moving and halting, by the beat of a kettle-drum [*petite timballe*]. They set out three or four hours before day, against which time all the camels and all the beasts of burden are to be in a readiness. There is no losing sight or stiacling from it without evident danger of perishing. The guides are so expert that, altho' there appear no track upon the sand, they never go a step out of the way. After having travell'd till midday, they stop for about half an hour, without unloading the camels; and after having taken a little rest, they pursue their journey until three or four hours within the night. Whereas [i.e. since] they observe in all their encampments the same rank and order

<sup>1</sup> Girga, on the Nile, about 90 miles south of Asyût, is still a place of considerable importance.

<sup>2</sup> Fr *pierre de taille*, i.e. free-stone.

<sup>3</sup> Asyût, the largest town in Upper Egypt, is still a place of commercial importance. The ruins mentioned were those of the ancient city of Isiu, on the site of which Asyût was built.

which they had at their first setting out, there never happens any dispute among the passengers concerning that.

We arriv'd on the 6th of October at Helaoue. 'Tis a pretty large borough [town: Fr. *bourgade*], and the last that is under the Grand Signior's jurisdiction. There is a garrison in it of 500 janisaries and 300 spahi's, under the command of an officer whom in that country they call *Kachif*.<sup>1</sup> Helaoue is very pleasant, and answers fully its name, which signifies 'a country of sweetness'.<sup>2</sup> Here are to be seen a great number of gardens, water'd with brooks, and a world of palm trees, which preserve a continual verdure. Coloquintida<sup>3</sup> is to be found there, and all the fields are fill'd with senna,<sup>4</sup> which grows upon a shrub about three foot high. This drug, which is so much esteem'd in Europe, is of no use in the country hereabouts. The inhabitants of Helaoue in their illnesses make only use of the root of *ezula*; which for a whole night they infuse in milk and take the day after, having first strain'd it thro' a sieve. This medicine is very violent, but 'tis what they like, and commend very much. The *ezula*<sup>5</sup> is a thick tree, the blossom of which is blue. It grows into a sort of ball, of an oval figure, full of cotton, of which the people of that country make pretty fine cloth.

We rested four days at Helaoue, to take in water and provisions, for we were to pass thro' a desert where there was neither brook nor fountain. The heat is so excessive, and the sands of those desarts so burning, that there is no marching barefoot without having one's feet extremely swell'd. Nevertheless, the

<sup>1</sup> Arabic *kāshif*.

<sup>2</sup> *Halāwa* is the Arabic for 'sweetness'. The place is not to be found in modern maps, but is marked in Bruce's map ('El Wah') as in 26° N. It was evidently in the Khargeh oasis. Ludolf (p. 395) gives the following as the usual halting-places of caravans proceeding from Asyūt to Sennar: Wacha (3 days), Meks (2 days); Scheb (3 days), Sellim (3 days), Moschu (5 days), Dungala (5 days), Kshabi (3 days), Kortu (3 days), Trere (3 days), Gerri (1 day); Helfage (1 day), Arbatg (3 days), Sennar (4 days). From Sennar to Tshelga [see p. 113], in Ethiopia, the journey took a fortnight. Ludolf adds that the caravan usually required three months to cover the distance between Wacha and Sennar, as it stayed for some time at various places for purposes of traffic. Le Grand (p. 411) reckons 25 days for the journey from Sennar to Gondar.

<sup>3</sup> Colocynth, or bitter apple, a gourd, the fruit of which is used as a purgative.

<sup>4</sup> Senna is a species of cassia, the leaves of which are used as a laxative. This is still an article of export from the Red Sea ports.

<sup>5</sup> The particulars given have not proved enough to enable this tree to be identified. Lockman guesses that the milk thistle is meant.

nights are cold enough; which occasions troublesome distempers in those who travel thro' that country, unless they take great precautions.

After two days' march we came to Chabbe,<sup>1</sup> which is a country full of alum. And within three days we reach'd to Selyma,<sup>2</sup> where we furnish'd ourselves with water for five days, from an excellent spring which is in the middle of the desert. Those vast wildernesses, where there is neither to be found bird nor wild beast nor herbs—no, nor so much as a little fly—and where nothing is to be seen but mountains of sand and the carcasses and bones of camels, imprint a certain horror in the mind, which makes this voyage very tedious and disagreeable. It wou'd be a hard matter to cross those frightful desarts without the assistance of camels. These animals will continue six or seven days without either eating or drinking; which I cou'd never have believ'd, if I had not observ'd it very particularly. That which is yet more surprising is what a venerable old man (brother of the Patriarch of Æthiopia), who was of our caravan, assured me, viz. that, having twice made the journey from Selyma to Sudan, thro' [*dans*] the country of the negro's, and having each time spent forty days in passing the desarts which lie in the road, the camels of that caravan had neither eat nor drunk during that whole time. 'Three or four hours' rest in a night suffices them and supplies the want of food; which you are not to give them before you have water'd them, because they wou'd otherwise burst.

The kingdom of Sudan lies westward of that of Sennar. The merchants of the Higher Egypt trade thither for gold and slaves. The Kings of Sennar and Sudan are almost continually at wars. As for the mulcs and asses which they make use of in passing thro' those desarts, they give them every day only a small quantity of water.

On the 26th of October we arriv'd at Machou,<sup>3</sup> a good large township on the eastern bank of the river Nile. This river forms in that place two great islands full of palm trees, of senna

<sup>1</sup> Al-Shabb, about 60 miles north of Selimah.

<sup>2</sup> The oasis of Selimah.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce's map shows this place as Moscho, on the western (not eastern) side of the river, in 21° N. lat. See also the map in Burckhardt's *Nubia* (p. 163), which also marks the island of Argo, close by.

and coloquintida. Machou, the only place inhabited between that and Helaoue, is in the province of Fungi.<sup>1</sup> It appertains to the King of Sennar, and is the beginning of the country of the Barauras, whom we call Barbarins.<sup>2</sup> The Erbab<sup>3</sup> or governour of this province, having understood that the Emperor of Æthiopia had sent for us to his court, invited us to come to Argos, where he resides. This borough is over against Machou, on the other side of the Nile. We went thither by boat. The Governour receiv'd us with much civility, and regal'd us for two days; which very much refresh'd us after the great fatigues we had undergone. The chief officer of the customs, who is son to the King of Dongola, has also his residence at Argos. This prince never appears in publick but mounted on horseback, cover'd with two hundred little brass [Fr. *bronze*] bells, which make a great noise, and attended by twenty musketeers and two hundred soldiers arm'd with lances and sabres. He came to visit our tents; where they presented him with coffee and where they paid the duties, which consist of soap and linen cloth. He did us the honour to invite us the next day to dinner. We went thither at the hour appointed. His palace is large and built of brick that is bak'd in the sun. The walls are very high, flank'd at certain distances with great square towers without any portholes [Fr. *embrasures*], because in that country they have no use of cannon, but only muskets.

After having pass'd eight days at Machou, we left it on the fourth of November, and we arriv'd on the 13th of the same month at Dongola [see p. 99]. All the country we met with upon our road up to this town, and even as far as Sennar, is very pleasant, but it has not above a league in breadth. Beyond this there are only frightful desarts. The Nile glides thro' the middle of that delicious plain. The banks are high, and much rais'd; so that 'tis not the overflowing of the river which causes the fruitfulness of this soil, as in Egypt, but the industry and labour of the inhabitants. Whereas it seldom rains in this country, they take care, by the means of certain wheels (which

<sup>1</sup> The kingdom of Sennar was established in 1484 by the negro tribe known to the Portuguese as the Fungis.

<sup>2</sup> The Nubians are known to the Egyptian Arabs as *Barābra* (Berbers).

<sup>3</sup> Bruce speaks of an '*Erbab* or chief'. De Brévedent spells it 'Abab'.

are turn'd by oxen, to pump up a prodigious quantity of water, which they convey thro' the middle of their grounds into large conservatories [Fr. *reservoirs*] made on purpose to receive it; from whence they afterwards draw it as occasion serves, to water their lands, which without this help wou'd otherwise be fruitless and barren.

Silver is of no use in this country in the way of trade; all is done by exchange of commodities, as in the primitive times. With pepper, aniseed, fenil,<sup>1</sup> cloves, and *chourga* (which is wool dy'd blue), with *spica* [spikenard] of France, *mahlab*<sup>2</sup> of Egypt, and other like things, passengers buy such provisions as they have occasion for. They eat no other bread than that of *dora*,<sup>3</sup> which is a small round grain and which they make use of for a sort of thick beer, very ill tasted. This being bad to keep, they are forc'd to make it fresh almost every hour. A man that has but some bread of *dora* and his gourd full of this unpleasant liquor (which they will drink till they are intoxicated, thinks himself happy and to make good cheer. With this light nourishment, the people here enjoy good health, and are more robust and stronger than the Europeans. Their houses are of mud, low, and cover'd with the reeds of *dora*. But their horses are exactly well shap'd and very proper for the menage. Their saddles are very high, both before and behind, which fatigues a horse much.<sup>4</sup> Persons of quality go bare-headed, with their hair braided agreeable enough. Their whole habit consists of a sort of mishapen vest, without sleeves. They wear nothing on their legs, nor on their feet except a single sole made fast with latches [i.e. straps]. The common people wrap themselves about with a piece of linen cloth, which they wear after [a] hundred different manners. The children are almost naked. All the men have lances, which they constantly carry with them. The iron at the end is like a hook; there are some of them very neat. Those who wear swords carry them hanging on their left arms. Oathes and blasphemies are very common amongst those stupid people; and who likewise are so de-

<sup>1</sup> Fennel (*foeniculum vulgare*), the fruit of which yields a volatile oil used for flavouring.

<sup>2</sup> Arabic *mahlab*, a strongly scented grain.

<sup>3</sup> Arabic *dura*, millet (*Sorghum vulgare*).

<sup>4</sup> The French text suggests that it was the rider who was tired.

bauch'd that they have neither modesty nor civility nor religion; for altho' Mahometanism is what at present they make profession of, yet they know no more than the bare formulary of their profession of faith, which they repeat upon all occasions. What is truly deplorable, and which drew tears from the eyes of Father Brevedent, my dear companion, is that it is not long since this was a Christian country, and that it has not lost the faith but only for want of some person who had zeal enough to consecrate himself to the instruction of this abandon'd nation. Upon our way we found a great number of hermitages and churches half ruin'd.

We made short journeys<sup>1</sup> from Machou to Dongola to recruit ourselves after those long ones we had made in passing thro' the desarts. It was not above two years since that country was depopulated by the plague. It was so violent at Cairo in the year 1696, when I was there, and where I expos'd myself to the service of the infected, that they assur'd me that there died every day to the number of ten thousand. This terrible scourge fell upon [*ravagea*] all the Higher Egypt and the country of the Barbarins; so that we found several towns and a great number of villages without inhabitants, and large provinces (at other times very fertile) quite laid waste and entirely abandon'd.

As soon as we came in sight of the city of Dongola, the captain of our caravan left us and went to beg permission of the King for himself and his company to enter the town; which was willingly granted him. We were at that time in a village, which is (as it were) the suburbs to the city; and we past the river in a great boat, which that prince keeps for the convenience of the publick. All merchandises pay a duty, but the passengers pay nothing.

The city of Dongola<sup>2</sup> is seated on the eastern bank of the Nile, upon the decline [slope: Fr. *penchant*] of a dry and sandy hill. The houses are ill built, and the streets half deserted and fill'd with heaps of sand, occasion'd by floods from the mountain. The castle is in the very center of the town. It is large and

<sup>1</sup> Lockman's translation—"travelled but gently"—is preferable. They took nine days for the journey, instead of the usual five.

<sup>2</sup> Not, of course, the present Dongola but the Old Dongola, 75 miles to the south-east. It is now in ruins.

spacious, but the fortifications are inconsiderable. It keeps in awe the Arabians, who are masters of the open country; where they have liberty to feed their flocks, paying a small tribute to the *Mek*<sup>1</sup> or King of Dongola. We had the honour to eat several times with that prince (but at a table apart). At the first audience he gave us, he was clad in a vest of green velvet which reach'd down to the ground. He has a numerous guard. Those who are near his person carry before them a long sword in the scabbard; the outward guards carry half-pikes. This prince came to give us a visit in our tent, and I having been successful in some cures I had undertaken, he invited us to stay at his court; but as soon as we had made known to him the engagements we had with the Emperour of Æthiopia, he press'd us no further. His kingdom is hereditary, but he pays a tribute to the King of Sennar.

We departed from Dongola on the 6th of January of the year 1699, and four days after we enter'd into the kingdom of Sennar. *Erbab* Ibrahim<sup>2</sup> (brother to the prime minister of the King), whom we found upon the frontier, receiv'd us with honour and defray'd our expences as far as Korti, <sup>3</sup> a fair [*grossse*] borough upon the Nile, whither he accompany'd us, and where we arriv'd on the 13th of January. Whereas the people who are beyond Korti upon the river Nile are in rebellion against the King of Sennar and that they pillage the caravans, when they pass thro' their country, they are forc'd to keep at a distance from the banks of the river, and, by directing their journey between the south and the west, to enter into the great desert of Bihouda [Bayuda], which is not to be cross'd in less than five days, whatever speed they make. This desert is not so frightful as those of Libya, where there is nothing to be seen but sand. In this you meet with, here and there, both grass and trees. After having pass'd it, we again met with the Nile at Derreira,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The French version notes here that the *Mek* or *Malek* of Dongola is named Achmet (Ahmed). The title derives from the Arabic *milk* (property).

<sup>2</sup> Called by De Brievedent 'le Cheik [i.e. Shaikh] Gardil'.

<sup>3</sup> On the left bank of the Nile, about 50 miles east of Old Dongola. The map in Burckhardt's *Nubia* shows Poncet's route from this point to Gondar, and from Gondar to Massawa, but the draughtsman had apparently little but Poncet's narrative to go upon, and the result is disappointing.

<sup>4</sup> Derrera, on the western bank, about 60 miles north of Khartoum.

a considerable village, where we rested two days. This is a plentiful country and (probably by reason of the great plenty) the inhabitants have given it the name of *Beladalla* [*bilād Allah*], that is to say 'God's country'.<sup>1</sup>

We left it on the 26th, and bent our course towards the west. There's not a village to be found upon that road; but the inhabitants, who live under tents, bring in provisions to travellers. After some days' journey, we again meet with the Nile, near Guerry.<sup>2</sup> 'Tis the residence of a governour, whose principal employ is to examine whether, in the caravans which come from Egypt, anyone has the smallpox, because that distemper is not less dangerous, nor makes less destruction, in that country than the plague in Europe. That governor show'd a particular civility to us, in favour of the throne of Æthiopia (as they express themselves when they mention that Emperor), and he exempted us from the quarantain which they usually make in that place, where is the passage over the Nile.

The manner of passing that river is somewhat singular. They put the men and the goods into the same vessel; but for beasts, they fasten them by the head and under the belly with cords, which they draw and slaken according as the motion of the vessel requires. The beasts swim, and suffer much in the passage, and many of them die; for, altho' the Nile be not broad at that place, yet it is rapid and deep.

We set out from Guerry the first of February, and took up our lodging at Alfaa,<sup>3</sup> a large village built with square stone; where the men are tall and comely.

After having travell'd towards the north-east,<sup>4</sup> to avoid the great windings of the Nile, and past thro' the villages of Alfon [*? Eilafun*], Cotram [*Fr. Cotran*], and Camin [*? Kamlin*], and cross'd a great island which is not taken notice of in our maps, we arriv'd at the town of Harbagy;<sup>5</sup> where there is plenty of

<sup>1</sup> Bruce explains that 'the Arabs of these deserts call it *Rahamet Allah*, "the mercy of God", and *Belled Allah* "the country which enjoys that mercy"'. (vol. iii, p. 492).

<sup>2</sup> De Brèvedent calls it 'Guelni'. It is Ludolf's 'Gerri'. Bruce's map places it in 16° N. lat., just above the fork of the White Nile and the Bahr-el-Azraq (Blue Nile).

<sup>3</sup> This seems to be Halfiyeh, a little above Khartoum.

<sup>4</sup> According to Bruce (vol. iii, p. 492) this is an error for 'south-west'.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce's 'Herbagi'. He places it at the confluence of the Blue Nile and the Dinder.



provisions, and where we refresh'd ourselves. The following days were spent in passing thro' the forests of acaccias,<sup>1</sup> in which the high thorny trees were loaded with flowers of a yellow and blue colour. These latter send forth a very agreeable flavour [*odem*] These woods are stor'd with little green parrets and a sort of wood-bons,<sup>2</sup> and a world of other birds which are not known in Europe. These delicious foests led us into large plains, which are extremely fruitful and well cultivated.

After holding on our journey for some time we came within sight of the city of Sennar,<sup>3</sup> and were charm'd with its pleasant situation. This city, which contains near a league and a half in compass, is very populous, but has nothing of neatness, and besides is ill govern'd. They number in it near a hundred thousand souls. It is seated westward of the river Nile, upon an eminence, at thirteen degrees, four minutes of northern latitude, according to the observation of Father De Bieudent, made at noon on the 21st of March 1699. The houses are only one story high and are ill built, but the flat roof which covers them is very convenient. As to the suburbs, they are only wretched cottages, cover'd with reeds. The King's palace is surrounded with high walls of brick bak'd in the sun, but has nothing regular in it. You see nothing but a confus'd heap of buildings, without symmetry or beauty. The apartments of this palace are furnish'd richly enough with large carpets, after the manner of the Levant.

We were presented to the King the day after our arrival. The first thing was to make us put off our shooes. This is a point of ceremony which all strangers must observe; for as to the native subjects of that prince, they are never to appear before him but barefoot. We enter'd immediately after into a large court pav'd with little square tiles of different colours, after the manner of fayence.<sup>4</sup> Round about it stood the guards, arm'd

<sup>1</sup> The gum acacia (*Spina Egyptiaca*), which grows plentifully in Abyssinia, and is a source of gum arabic.

<sup>2</sup> Fr *gelinottes* (hazel hens). Lockman translates it as 'wood-hens'.

<sup>3</sup> De Bieudent says they arrived on 12 February (v s). Sennar is situated on the Blue Nile, in lat. 13° 34' N, so the Jesuit's observation was faulty. The site of the old city (also on the river) is several miles to the westward. A description of it in 1701-2 is given at p. 285 of Kämpf's narrative.

<sup>4</sup> This appears to mean like clockery (*fayence*).

with lances. When we had almost past over the court, they oblig'd us to stop short before a stone, which is near to an open hall, where the King usually gives audience to ambassadors. There we saluted the King according to the custom of the country, falling upon our knees and thrice kissing the ground. That prince is nineteen years of age, black, but well shap'd and of a majestick presence; not having thick lips nor flat nose, like the rest of his subjects. He was seated upon a rich bed under a canopy, with his legs across, after the oriental fashion; and round him twenty old men, seated after the same manner, but somewhat lower. He was cloath'd with a long vest of silk, embroider'd with gold, and girt with a kind of scarf made of fine calico. He had a white turban on his head. The old men were clad much after the same manner. At the entrance of the hall, the Prime Minister, standing, complimented the King in our names, and deliver'd back his answer to us. Then we saluted the prince a second time, as we had done in the court, and we presented him with some chrystals and other curiosities of Europe, which he graciously accepted. He asked us many questions, which discover him to be curious and of a piercing wit [i.e. intelligence]. He enquir'd the occasion of our journey, and seem'd to bear a great affection and respect to the Emperour of Æthiopia. After an hour's audience we withdrew, making three profound reverences. He order'd his guards to attend us to our lodgings, and afterwards sent us great vessels fill'd with butter, hony, and other refreshments, and moreover two oxen and two sheep.

This prince dines twice a week at one of his country houses, which is at a league's distance from the town. The order he observes in his march is this. Between three and four hundred horsemen, mounted upon fine horses, make the first appearance. After these comes the King, attended by a great number of footmen and arm'd souldiers, who with a loud voice sing forth his praises and play upon the tabor [*tambour de basque*], which makes no unpleasant harmony. Seven or eight hundred young maids and women march together with these souldiers, and carry upon their heads great round baskets of straw, of different colours and finely made. These baskets, which represent all sorts of flowers and the covers whereof are pyramid-

wise, are fill'd with copper dishes tinn'd over and full of fruit and several meats ready dress'd. These dishes are serv'd before the King, and afterwards are distributed amongst those who have the honour to attend upon him. Two or three hundred horsemen follow in the same order as those that went foremost, and close the whole march.

The King, who never appears in publick but with his face cover'd with a silk gauze of several colours,<sup>1</sup> sits down to table as soon as he is arriv'd. The usual diversion of this prince is to propose prizes to the lords of his court and to shoot with them at a mark with a gun; at which they are not as yet very expert. After they have spent the best part of the day in this exercise, they return in the evening to the town, observing the same order as at their setting out in the morning. This entertainment is regularly taken on Wednesday and Saturday every week. On other days he holds a council, morning and evening, and applies himself to administer justice to his subjects without leaving any crime unpunish'd. In that country they don't seek to protract causes. As soon as a criminal is seiz'd, they bring him before the judge, who examines him and condemns him to die, if he be guilty. The sentence is executed upon the spot. They take the criminal and throw him upon the ground; then with great clubs they beat him upon the breast till he expires. In this manner, during our stay at Sennar, they treated an Æthiopian call'd Joseph, who had had the misfortune some time before to renounce the Christian religion and embrac'd the Mahometan.<sup>2</sup>

After this terrible execution, they brought me a little Turkish<sup>3</sup> girl, about five or six months old, to be cur'd of an infirmity. Whereas this child was in a desperate condition, without hopes of life, Father De Brevedent christen'd it under pretence of applying some remedy, and this infant was so happy as to die after receiving holy baptism; in which it seem'd that God, by his wonderful providence, wou'd please [*avoit voulu*] to repair the loss of that unfortunate Æthiopian. Father De Brevedent

<sup>1</sup> A similar practice was anciently observed in Abyssinia. Alvarez, describing (p. 202) an interview with the Negus, says: 'there was a piece of blue taffeta before his face, which covered his mouth and beard, and from time to time they lowered it and the whole of his face appeared, and again they raised it.'

<sup>2</sup> For this incident see Poncet's letter on p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> The French text has 'Mahometane'.

on his part was so overwhelm'd with joy, for having open'd heaven to this soul, that he assur'd me, with a transport not to be express'd, that, altho' he had done nothing else in all his life, he shou'd esteem himself well recompenc'd for all the pains and fatigues he had undergone in this voyage.

All things are very cheap at Sennar. A camel costs not above seven or eight *livers*;<sup>1</sup> an ox fifty pence [*sols*]; a sheep fifteen; and a hen a penny [*un sol*]. Wheaten bread does not relish with those people; which they only make for strangers. The bread which they themselves eat is that of *dora*, which is a small grain, as I said before. 'Tis good whilst it is new; but after one day it grows insipid and not to be eaten. 'Tis a sort of large cake, about the thickness of a crown.

The commodities of this country are elephants' teeth, the fruit call'd tamarin[d], civet, tobacco, gold dust, &c. They keep a market every day in the wide place in the middle of the town, where they sell all sorts of provisions and goods. They also have another before the King's palace. 'Tis in this market that they expose their slaves to sale. They sit upon the ground, with their legs across; the men and boys on one side and the women and girls on the other. You may have one of the strongest and most robust for ten crowns;<sup>2</sup> which makes the Egyptian merchants buy up a great number every year.

The smallest piece of money of that kingdom is of the value of a French *double*.<sup>3</sup> 'Tis a little bit of iron of the figure of St Antony's cross.<sup>4</sup> The *fadda* [Arabic *fidda*] comes from Turkey, and is a small silver piece less than a *denier*; it's worth a penny.<sup>5</sup> Besides these two sorts of coin they only make use of Spanish *reals* and *piastres*;<sup>6</sup> which are to be round, for the square ones are not current in trade. A *piastre* is about the value of four *livers*<sup>6</sup> in that country.

<sup>1</sup> The *livre* or *franc* was worth about 1s. 6d., and equalled twenty *sols* or *sous*.

<sup>2</sup> The French crown (*écu*) was equivalent to 4s. 6d. (Tavernier, vol. i, p. 327).

<sup>3</sup> The *double* was worth two *deniers*, or the sixth of a *sol*.

<sup>4</sup> A cross formed by a bar placed across the top of an upright, giving the shape of a block capital T.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. *sol marqué*. Lockman explains this as meaning a *sol* stamped by the French government to increase its value.

<sup>6</sup> The French text has 'francs'. The Spanish *piastre* or *real* of eight was worth 4s. 6d. (Tavernier, vol. i, p. 328).

The heats are so insupportable at Sennar<sup>1</sup> that a man has a difficulty to breath in the daytime. They begin in the month of January, and last to the end of April. They are follow'd by plentiful rains, which continue three months, and infect the air; which causes a great mortality, both amongst men and beast[s]. 'Tis in some measure the fault of the inhabitants; who are slovenly and who take no care to drain away the waters, but let them stagnate and corrupt, so as to send forth malignant vapours.

These people are naturally crafty and deceitful; but on the other side very superstitious and wedded to Mahometanism. When they meet a Christian in the streets, they never fail to recite their profession of faith, which consists in these words: 'there is only one God, and Mahomet is his prophet.' Brandy, wine, and even metheglin<sup>2</sup> are forbidden them; and they only drink of them in private. Their ordinary drink is a sort of beer, like to that of Dongola. They call it *bousa*;<sup>3</sup> 'tis very thick and ill-tasted. The manner of preparing it is this: they parch the grain *dora* upon the fire; then they put it into cold water, and after four and twenty hours drink of it. They also use coffee, which they willingly drink. In Æthiopia they make no use of it.

The women of quality are cover'd with a silken vest, or of very fine calico, with large sleeves which hang down to the ground. Their hair is twisted, and set out with rings of silver, copper, brass, and ivory, or of glass of different colours. These rings are fasten'd to their locks in form of crowns. Their arms, legs, ears, and even nostrils are cover'd with these rings. Upon their fingers they wear several rings; but the stones are not fine. They wear nothing on their feet but single soles, which they fasten with strings. The ordinary women and girls are only cover'd from the wast to the knee.

The commodities which are carried into the kingdom of

<sup>1</sup> 'In Arabic Sennar means poison and fire' (*note in French text*). Prof. Arberry says this is a fanciful derivation from the Arabic words *samm* and *nār*; the actual origin of the name is unknown.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. *hydromel*. This drink is described on p. 120. The metheglin known to our ancestors was fermented from honey and water and flavoured with spices.

<sup>3</sup> Egyptian Arabic *buzza*.

Sennar are spices, paper, brass, iron, brass wire, vermilion, sublimate,<sup>1</sup> white and yellow arsenick, iron ware, *spica*<sup>2</sup> of France, *mahaleb*<sup>3</sup> of Egypt (which is a grain of a strong scent), Venice ware (which are several sorts of glass beads of all colours), and lastly black to blacken, which they call *kool*,<sup>3</sup> and is much esteem'd in that country, because they make use of it to blacken their eyes and eyebrows. All these commodities have also good vent in Æthiopia, with this difference that at Sennar the large beads of glass are most esteem'd and in Æthiopia the lesser.

The merchants of Sennar have a great trade towards the East. At the time of the mousson [monsoon] they embark at Suaquen [Suakin], upon the Red Sea. The fishing for pearls which is perform'd in that place, and the town of Suaquen, belongs to the Grand Seigneur. They pass from thence to Moka, a town of Arabia Felix appertaining to the King of Yemen, from whence they proceed to Surate; to which place they carry gold, civet, elephants' teeth, and bring from thence spices and other merchandice of the Indies. They commonly spend no less than two years in making that voyage.

When the King of Sennar happens to die, the Great Council meets and, by a barbarous and detestable custom, orders the throats to be cut of all the brothers of that prince who is to ascend the throne. Prince Gorech, who lay hid untill the death of the King his brother, had the good fortune to be preserv'd by his nurse from the cruelty of this terrible Council. They have also sav'd one of the brothers of the present King. That prince is at the court of Æthiopia, where he distinguishes himself as well by his merits as his birth.

Having staid three months at the court of the King of Sennar, who had entertain'd us very honourably, we took leave of him. He had the goodness to give us a person<sup>4</sup> to be our safeguard, to defray the expences of our journey, and to conduct us to the frontiers of his kingdom. We embark'd in a

<sup>1</sup> If the pigment known as blue sublimate is intended, this was made from mercury, flowers of sulphur, and sal ammoniac.

<sup>2</sup> For these two commodities see p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> A cosmetic (Arabic *kohl*), usually antimony, much employed in the East for the purpose indicated in the text.

<sup>4</sup> The French text adds 'qu'on appelle *Soccori*'.

great trunk of a tree, made hollow in the shape of a boat. We past the Nile on the 12th of May 1699, and encamp'd at Bas-boch, a fair village half a league<sup>1</sup> from the town of Sennar. There we waited three days, till the rest of our caravan was come up; and from thence we parted on the 15th of May, in the evening. We travell'd all the night as far as Bacras, a large burough; the lord of which was a venerable old man, a hundred and thirty years old, and who appear'd to us as strong and vigorous as if he had not been above forty. He had serv'd five kings of Sennar. We made him a visit, and he receiv'd us very graciously, and enquir'd of us what news from Europe. We made him a small present, and he sent us some provisions into our tent, in token of his acknowledgments.

We held on our journey, and arriv'd the day after at Abecq [*Abeg*], a pitiful hamlet, where there is nothing but shepherds' cottages; and the day after we reach'd Baha, having march'd ten hours without intermission. Baha is a little village upon an arm of the Nile which is dry'd up. On the 19th we took up our lodging at Dodar, a place as inconsiderable as Baha; and the day following, after four hours' journey, we came to Abra, a large burough; where we lost two of our camels, which we had difficulty to find again. Then we made to the village of De-barke,<sup>2</sup> and after that to Bulbul. And after having travell'd thro' a very pleasant country and well peopled, on the 25th of May we arriv'd at Giesim [see p. 110], a considerable town on the bank of the Nile<sup>3</sup> and in the middle of a forest, the trees whereof were much different from what we had ever seen. They are higher than our tallest oaks, and there are some so big that nine men at arm's length wou'd not be able to encompass them. Their leaf is almost like to that of a melon, and their fruit, which is very bitter, to a gourd [*courge*]. There are also round ones. I saw at Giesim one of those great trees, quite hollow by nature and without art. They enter'd into it thro' a little door, into a kind of chamber open at top; the compass

<sup>1</sup> Bruce says about 4 miles north of Sennar. Poncet's route from this point is hard to follow. Part of it is marked on Bruce's map, but not, it would appear, from actual knowledge, as he followed a different route.

<sup>2</sup> Heawood (p. 152) locates this place as being on the Dinder

<sup>3</sup> This appears to be wrong. Bruce places Giesim on the right bank of the Rahad.

whereof was so great that fifty persons might easily stand up in it.<sup>1</sup>

I also saw another sort of tree,<sup>2</sup> which is not thicker than one of our oaks but which is as high as those I spoke of. Its fruit is of the figure of a water melon, but not altogether so big. It is divided within into little cells, fill'd with yellow seeds and a certain substance which resembles very much our powder-sugar. This substance has a little sharpness, but not disagreeable; it has a good flavour and very refreshing, which is of great use in a country so hot as that is. Its bark is hard and thick. The blossom of this tree has five white leaves like a lily, and yields a seed not unlike to that of a poppy.

There is also in that country another sort of tree call'd *Deleb*.<sup>3</sup> 'Tis as high again as the highest palm-trees and almost of the same figure. Its leaves resemble a fan, but broader. Its fruit is round and in a bunch, and, from the stalk to the middle of it, somewhat thicker than the fruit I mention'd. 'Tis cover'd with five shells, which frame a sort of cup. It is yellow when it is ripe, and its rind is so thick and hard that, when these trees are shaken by the winds, these fruit[s], knocking against one another, make a frightful noise. Should any one loosen and fall upon a man's head, 'twould infallibly kill him. When one has crack'd the shell of this fruit (which is no easie matter), you discover a world of little strings, which support a substance almost like to our honey. This substance, which smells like balm, is so sweet and pleasant that I don't remember ever to have eat anything more delicious. In the middle of this substance you find as it were a large dark-colour'd pea [*lentille brune*], and very hard, which is the seed of this tree. Besides the fruit I speak of, this same tree bears another of the figure of a radish;<sup>4</sup> cover'd with three skins, which you are to take off[f], and then it has the tast[e] of roasted chesnuts.

The *Dom*<sup>5</sup> is, as 'twere, the male of the *Deleb*. It is not by

<sup>1</sup> This is the baobab (*Adansonia digitata*). The fruit is sometimes called monkey bread.

<sup>2</sup> The French text adds 'named *Gelingue*'. This has not been identified by the botanists consulted.

<sup>3</sup> The *deleb* or palmyra palm (*Borassus Aethiopum*, Mart.).

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Dandy thinks that this was merely an unopened inflorescence.

<sup>5</sup> The doum palm (*Hyphaene thebaica*, Mart.).



one half so high as the palm-tree, but its leaves are almost as long and twice as broad. They make baskets of them, mats, and even sails for the vessels of the Red Sea. This tree produces a fruit a foot in length, which is cover'd with five or six leaves; the meat of which is white and sweet like milk, and very nourishing.

The tree which they call *Cougles* is also of a prodigious bulk.<sup>1</sup> 'Tis as it were nine or ten great trees bound and glu'd together after a very irregular manner. It has a small leaf, and bears no fruit—only little blue flowers without scent. There are also in the vast forests of that country several other trees wholly unknown to the Europeans.

We rested nineteen days at Giesim. This place is the midway between the town of Sennar and the confines of Æthiopia, and at the tenth degree of northern latitude, according to the observation which Father De Brevedent made of it.<sup>2</sup> When you are come as far as Giesim you are oblig'd to quit your camels, by reason of the mountains that are to be cross'd and the herbs [Fr. *herbes*] which poison those animals; and this is the reason why in Æthiopia they only make use of mules and horses (but without shoeing them). These camels are sold at Giesim, upon condition they shall be only made use of as far as Girana, to which place folks resort to buy them. We saw at Giesim a caravan of *gebertis*. These are a Mahomitan people, and depend upon the Emperour of Æthiopia, who treats them as slaves, suitable to what their name imports.<sup>3</sup>

The occasion of the long stay we made here<sup>4</sup> was the death of the Queen, mother to the King of Sennar. The officer who conducted us return'd back to Sennar to take new orders from the King his master, and we were oblig'd to wait for him. It

<sup>1</sup> Not identified.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce notes that the latitude of Giesim is not 10° N., but 14° 12' N., and that it is about 110 miles from Sennar and 203 from Gondar (vol. III, p. 495). Heawood (p. 152) notes that maps place it near the source of the Dinder in 12° N. This, however, would be obviously too far south.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce says (vol. II, p. 174 n.): '*Ghibbertis* is the epithet used to denote their faith by the Abyssinian Mahometans.' Col. Eadie thinks it possible that the word has some connexion with the Guiz and Amharic term *Gabir*, which means 'servant' (see p. 125).

<sup>4</sup> The French text reads: 'in this town, the situation of which is beautiful and agreeable'.

was a troublesome disappointment to us, for we were surpris'd there by the rains. In the beginning it only rain'd after sunset. Thunder and lightning always goes before the rain. In the daytime the heavens are serene, but the heat is insupportable.

We set out from Giesim on the 11th of June, and after five hours we came to a village which they call Deleb, by reason of the long walks of trees [*de ce nom*], which you see as far as your eyes can carry. We march'd a good while thro' those delicious allies, which are planted chequerwise. The day following brought us to Chau, a village upon the Nile; and the next day to Abotkna, where there is a kind of box-tree [*boms*], which has neither the leaf nor hardness of ours. All along that road you meet with great forests of tamarinds,<sup>1</sup> always green. The leaf is a little larger than that of the cypress. This tree has little blue blossoms, which have a pretty smell and a fruit almost like a plum. They call it *erdeb* in this country. These forests of tamarinds are so bushy that they are impenetrable to the sun.

We past the night after [in] the valley of Sonnone, thro' the middle of a pleasant meadow; and after two days we enter'd Serke, a pretty town of above five or six hundred houses, very neat, altho' built of Indian canes [i.e. bamboos]. Serke is surrounded with mountains, in a fine vale. You meet with a brook at your going out of the town; and 'tis this little brook which separates Æthiopia from the kingdom of Sennar.

From Serke, which we left on the 20th of June, as far as Gondar (the capital of Æthiopia) we found a world of pleasant fountains [i.e. springs] and almost a chain of mountains, of different figures but all very delightful and cover'd with trees which are unknown in Europe and which appear'd to us larger and higher than those of Sennar. These mountains, of which some rise in pyramids and others in cones, are so well cultivated that there is no wast ground; and on the other side<sup>2</sup> are so well peopled that one would almost take it for one continu'd town.

We took up our lodging the following day at Tambisso, a

<sup>1</sup> The *amarindus indica*, which is indigenous in East Africa, from Abyssinia to the Zambesi.

<sup>2</sup> 'Moreover' (*d'ailleurs*) is intended.

large village which belongs to the Patriarch of Æthiopia. And the next day brought us to Abiad, situate upon a high mountain cover'd with sycamores. From Giesim to this village the fields are fill'd with cotton.

On the 23d of June we made a stop in a valley full of ebony-trees and Indian canes; where a lion carry'd away one of our camels. Lions are very common in this country, and you may hear them roar all the night. They are driven away by lighting great fires, which they take care to keep in. There grow upon those mountains *squinantes*<sup>1</sup> and other aromack plants and herbs.

On the 24th we pass'd the river Gandova,<sup>2</sup> which is very deep and rapid; which makes the passage not a little dangerous. 'Tis not altogether so broad as the Seine at Paris. It descends from the mountains with that violence that, at the time of its inundation, it bears all before it. The floods are sometimes so great that it is not to be past under ten days. It being at that time very low, we had no difficulty in passing. It disburdens itself into another river, call'd Tekesel<sup>3</sup> (that is to say, 'the dreadful'), and those two rivers, join'd together, empty themselves into the Nile. We also past two other large rivers the day after. They were border'd with box-trees of a wonderful bigness, and high as our beeches [*hestres*]. On that day one of our beasts of carriage, stragling from the caravan, was bitten on the hip by a bear.<sup>4</sup> The wound was great and dangerous. The people of that country did nothing but apply a caustick with fire, and the beast was cur'd.

We enter'd on the 26th into a great plain, planted with pomegranate-trees. We travell'd thro' it in the night, in sight of Girana, where we arriv'd the next day. Girana is a village, situated on the top of a mountain, from whence you discover the most delicious country in the world. 'Tis in this place that

<sup>1</sup> The squinancy-wort or small woodruff (*Asperula cynanchica*), a herb used as a remedy for sore throat.

<sup>2</sup> The Gandava rises north-west of Lake Tana and unites with other streams to form the Atbara.

<sup>3</sup> The Takkaze rises east of Lake Tana and, running northwards, joins the Atbara in 14° 10' N. latitude. The combined streams flow into the Nile 200 miles below Khartoum. The *Encyclo. Brit.* says that Takkaze means 'the terrible'.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce says that there are no bears in that part of the country, and suggests that the assailant may have been a hyena.

you alter your manner of travelling, and leave the camels to take horses (as I said before). The lord of Girana came to make us a visit, and order'd refreshments to be brought us. We there found a convoy [*escorte*] of thirty men, whom the Emperor had sent for our security and to do honour to the brother of the Patriarch, who was in our caravan; and they freed us from the care of our baggage, according to the custom of that empire. The manner and way of it is as follows. When the Emperour of Æthiopia sends for anyone to his court, they recommend his baggage to the lord of the first village he meets upon the road. That lord puts it into the hands of his vassals, who are oblig'd to carry it to the next village. These deliver it over to the inhabitants of the second village, who carry it till they meet with a third; and so successively, until they come to the capital. All this is perform'd with a wonderful exactness and fidelity.

The rains, the fatigue of our voyage, but principally the indisposition of F[ather] De Brevedent, oblig'd us to stay some days at Girana. However, we left it on the first of July; and after three hours' march thro' mountains and ways impracticable, we came to Barangoa; and the next day to Chelga,<sup>1</sup> a great and fair town, beset on all sides with aloes. 'Tis a place of great commerce. They hold a market there every day, where the inhabitants of the neighbourhood come to vent civet, gold, and all sorts of cattle and provisions. The King of Sennar has in this town, by the consent of the Emperor of Æthiopia, an officer of the customs, to receive all the duties of [the] cotton which they bring from his kingdom into Æthiopia; and those duties are equally divided between those two princes.

About two leagues from Chelga towards the north there is to be seen a torrent, which falls from a very high and steep mountain, and which makes a natural cascade, not easily imitable by art. The water of this cascade, dividing itself into different canals, waters all the country about, and renders it extremely fertile.

At length we arriv'd on the 3d of July at Barko,<sup>2</sup> a neat little town in the middle of a pleasant plain, half a day's journey from the capital of Æthiopia. We were constrain'd to take up

<sup>1</sup> Chilga, about 25 miles south-west of Gondar, in lat. 12° 30', long. 37° 5'.

<sup>2</sup> Budge calls it Bartcha.

[i.e. stop] in that place, by reason of my falling very ill, and because my dear companion, F[ather] De Brevedent, found himself in a few days reduc'd to the last extremity by a violent purging, occasion'd by the kernels of Indian pineapples,<sup>1</sup> called *cataputia*, which they had given him unfortunately at Tripoli in Syria. This remedy, always dangerous (according to an able physician<sup>2</sup>), had caus'd a flux which incommoded him much, and which he conceal'd from me thro' modesty. I had no sooner learn'd the condition he was in but I order'd myself to be carry'd into his chamber, although I was at that time very much out of order. My tears, more than my words, gave him to understand that I despair'd of his cure and that his illness was without remedy. Those tears were sincere; and if I could have sav'd him at the expence of my own life, I shou'd have done it with pleasure. But he was ripe for heaven, and Almighty God thought fit to call him to the reward of his apostolical labours. I had been acquainted with him at Cairo; where he was in so great reputation that he pass'd for a man favour'd of God by extraordinary graces, and even the gift of miracles and prophecy. I had fram'd this idea of him upon the common report, but was afterwards more thoroughly convinc'd of the truth by the several predictions he made, both of his own death and divers other things, which happen'd to me in the manner he foretold me. During the whole voyage his discourse was altogether of God, and his expressions were so lively and so full of piety that they made deep impressions upon me. In the last moments of his life his heart vented itself in sentiments of love and gratitude towards God, so ardent and tender that I shall ever retain them in my memory. It was with these sentiments that this holy man expir'd in a foreign land, within sight of the capital city of Æthiopia, as St. Francis Xavierius (whose name he bore) had died within sight of China, as he was ready to enter into it to reduce that vast empire to Jesus Christ.

That I may do justice to Father de Brevedent, I must own that I never knew a man more undaunted and more courageous in dangers, more zealous and more resolute when the interest

<sup>1</sup> French *pignons d'Inde*, defined by Littre as the seeds of *Jatropha curcas*, extremely bitter in taste and violently purgative.

<sup>2</sup> 'Philos. Cosmopol.' [Author's note.]

of religion required, more modest and more religious in his behaviour and whole conduct.<sup>1</sup> He died the 9th of July of the year 1699, at three a clock in the night. Many religious persons of Æthiopia, who were present at his death, were so mov'd and so edified that I doubt not but they will all their lives conserve a great respect for the memory of so good a missionary. Those religious came the next day in a body, clad in their habits of ceremony, having each an iron cross in his hand. After having perform'd the prayers for the dead and the usual ceremonies of incense, they themselves carried the body into a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, where it was inter'd.

My indisposition, and the grief with which I was overwhelm'd, detain'd me at Barko to the 21st of July; on which day I set out for Gondar,<sup>2</sup> where I arriv'd in the evening. I [a]lighted at the palace; where an apartment was prepar'd for me, near to that of one of the Emperour's children.<sup>3</sup> I had the honour the next day to see His Majesty; who gave me several marks of his goodness and express'd a concern for the death of my companion, of whom he had receiv'd a character both for his merits and capacity. He order'd me to take all the rest that shou'd be necessary to recruit me before I shou'd appear

<sup>1</sup> Some particulars of the career of this estimable Jesuit are given by Father Le Gobien, S J, in his preface to the French edition of Poncet's narrative. De Brevedent came of a distinguished Rouen family. After joining the Jesuits he devoted himself for some time to the study of theology and mathematics, and in 1685 his project for a perpetual motion machine attracted considerable attention. Later he concentrated upon missionary work, and for more than ten years laboured in the Greek Archipelago and Syria. Proceeding to Cairo he there distinguished himself by his work among the victims of the plague. His sweetness of disposition, his zeal, and his austere life excited the admiration of all who knew him.

<sup>2</sup> 'On appelle cette ville capitale Gondar à Catwa, c'est à-dire *Ville du Cachet*.' [Author's note.] Gondar *katama* would mean 'Gondar town', there seems to be no connexion with 'scal'. Gondar, for centuries the capital of Abyssinia, is situated about 25 miles north of Lake Tana, in lat. 12° 35' N., long. 37° 30' E. It is built on a hill, over 6,000 feet above sea-level, between two rivers which unite below the town. To-day it is of slight importance, with a population estimated at 5,000. The ruins of the royal palaces (destroyed by Menelik in 1866) are conspicuous features. Three pictures of them will be found in Dr. Mathew's book; others are given by Budge.

<sup>3</sup> De Maillet wrote later that, according to Poncet's statement, he was at first lodged in a native hut, but later, upon his complaining of this, the Emperor assigned him a house built after the European manner by the Portuguese (Le Grand, p. 367).

in publick. He came almost every day to visit me, thro' a little gallery which had communication with his apartment.

When I was recover'd of the fatigues of so long and painful a voyage, he did me the honour to give me a publick audience. It was on the tenth of August, about ten a clock in the morning. They waited on me at my chamber, and, after having conducted me thro' more than twenty appartments, I enter'd into a hall, where the Emperour was seated upon his throne. It was a sort of couch, cover'd with a carpet of red damask flower'd with gold. There were round about great cushions wrought with gold. This throne, of which the feet were of massy silver,<sup>1</sup> was plac'd at the bottom of a hall, in an alcove cover'd with a dome all shining with gold and azure. The Emperour was cloath'd with a vest of silk, embroider'd with gold and with very long sleeves. The scarf with which he was girt was embroider'd after the same manner. He was bareheaded and his hair braided very neatly. A great emerald glitter'd on his forehead and added majesty to him. He was alone in the alcove I mention'd; seated upon his couch, with his legs across, after the manner of the Orientals. The great lords were on each side of him, standing in their ranks, having their hands cross'd one upon the other, and observing an awful silence.

When I was come to the foot of the throne, I made three profound reverences to the Emperour and kiss'd his hand. 'Tis an honour which he allows to none but such as he has a mind to distinguish; for as to others he permits them not to kiss his hands till after thrice prostrating on the ground and kissing his feet. I presented to him a letter of Monsieur Maillet, the French Consul at Caire. He caus'd it immediately to be interpreted to him, and seem'd well pleas'd with it. He ask'd me several questions concerning the King (of whom he spoke to me as of the greatest and most powerful prince of Europe), of the state of his royal family, [and] of the greatness and strength of France. As soon as I had answer'd all these questions, I made him my presents, which consisted of pictures, looking-glasses, chrystals, and other glass works finely wrought. The Emperour receiv'd them in a very gracious manner; and whereas I was yet weak, not being perfectly

<sup>1</sup> 'Gold' in the French text.

recover'd, he order'd me to sit, and a magnificent collation to be brought.

The next day he and one of his children began their course of physick. They both observ'd exactly the dyet [*regime*] I prescrib'd; which was so successful that in a little time they were perfectly cur'd.<sup>1</sup> I observ'd in this prince a great stock of piety; for altho' he had not finish'd the taking his remedies, yet he wou'd not omit to communicate and appear in publick on the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin,<sup>2</sup> to whom the Æthiopians have a particular devotion. He invited me to that ceremony. I fail'd not to be at it, about eight a clock, and found about twelve thousand men drawn up in rank and file in the great court of the palace. The Emperour was upon that occasion clad with a vest of blue velvet, flower'd with gold, which trail'd upon the ground. His head was cover'd with a muslin, strip'd gold, which fram'd a sort of crown after the manner of the ancients, and which left the middle of his head bare. His shooes were wrought, after the Indian fashion, with flowers beset with pearls. Two princes of the blood, richly cloath'd, waited for him at the palace gate with a magnificent canopy, under which the Emperour march'd, with his trumpets, kettle-drums, flutes,<sup>3</sup> hautboys, and other instruments going before him, which made a good agreeable harmony. He was follow'd by the seven chief ministers of the empire, supporting each other under the arms and with their heads cover'd almost like the Emperour; having each a lance in his hand. He that walk'd in the middle carry'd the imperial crown, with his head uncover'd, and seem'd to rest it, with some difficulty, against his breast. This crown, which is clos'd with a cross of precious stones on the top, is very magnificent. I march'd in the same line with the ministers; habited after the Turkish manner and conducted by an officer who held me under the arm. The officers of the crown, supported in the same manner, follow'd, singing the praises of the Emperour and answering as it were in choires. Then came the musketeers, in their closebody'd coats

<sup>1</sup> The translator has omitted the following passage. 'This success brought me fresh gratitude, and as a result the Emperor treated me with more familiarity than before.'

<sup>2</sup> 15 August.

<sup>3</sup> The French text adds harps.



of different colours; and were follow'd by the archers, carrying their bows and arrows. Last of all, this procession was closed by the Emperour's led horses, richly harness'd and cover'd with costly stuffs of gold hanging down to the ground, over which were the skins of tygers, extremely beautiful.

The Patriarch, in his pontifical habits, wrought with crosses of gold, waited for him at the entrance of the chappel, accompany'd with near a hundred religious persons clad in white. They made a lane on both sides, and holding an iron cross in their hands; some within the chapel, and some without. The Patriarch took the Emperour by the right hand at his entring the chapel (which is call'd *Tensa Christos*,<sup>1</sup> that is to say 'the Church of the Resurrection') and led him up<sup>2</sup> thro' the middle of the religious, holding each a lighted flambeau in their hands. They carry'd the canopy over the Emperour's head up to his praying-place [*priedien*], which was cover'd with a rich carpet and is almost like to the praying-desks of the prelates in Italy. The Emperour remain'd standing almost all the while, unto the time of communion, which the Patriarch gave him under both species. The ceremonies of the Mass are very fine and majestick; but I have not so exact a remembrance as to give a relation of them.

The ceremony being ended, they discharg'd two pieces of canon, as they had done at his entrance, and so the Emperor withdrew, and return'd back to the palace in the same order he came. The officer who carry'd the crown deliver'd it into the hands of the High Treasurer, who carry'd it into the treasury, accompany'd by a band of fusileers.

The Emperour, at his return into the great hall of his palace, seated himself upon a throne rais'd very high; having on each side the two princes his children, and behind them the ministers. I myself was plac'd over against [*vis-à-vis*] the Emperour. All the assembly continu'd standing in a profound silence with their hands across. After the Emperour had taken some metheglin and some orange peel, which they presented him in a golden cup, those who had favours to beg came in and ad-

<sup>1</sup> Amharic *tinsa Christos*, 'the resurrection of Christ' ('church' being understood). Dr. Mathew (p. 68) suggests that the chapel was 'the Addebabai Jesus'.

<sup>2</sup> The French text adds: 'to a place near the altar'.

vanc'd up to the foot of the throne; where one of the ministers took their petitions and read them with a loud voice. Sometimes the Emperour took the pains to read them himself, and made answer to them out of hand.

The Emperour on that day eat in publick, and in ceremony. He was seated upon a kind of bed, having a great table before him. There were several others of a lower size for the lords of the court. Beef, mutton, and fowl are the meats they serve up. They dress them almost all by way of ragout [i.e. stew]; but they mix so much peper, and so many other spices which are unknown to us, that an European cannot eat of them. He is serv'd in chinaware, and one dish at a time. I saw no wild fowl; and they assur'd me that they eat none in Æthiopia. I was surpris'd to see raw beef serv'd up to the Emperour's table. They season it after a particular manner. After having cut a piece of beef into bits, they water them with the gall of the same animal, and then powder them with peper and other spices. This ragout, which in their opinion is the most exquisite dish that can be made, appear'd very nauseous to me. The Emperour touch'd none of it, because I had signify'd that nothing could be more noxious to his health. They have also another manner of seasoning raw meat in that country. They take out of the paunch of a beef [i.e. ox] the herbs [*herbes*] which are not quite digested. They mix them with the meat, and together with mustard they make a ragout call'd *menta*;<sup>1</sup> which is yet more unsavory than that I spoke of.

Whereas the table at which I was plac'd was near the Emperour's, he often directed his discourse to me.<sup>2</sup> There is an officer whose employ is (as in France) to tast all the dishes which are serv'd up to the table. The Emperour drank first a little brandy (which was presented to him in a chrystal glass), and afterwards only metheglin. If he chances to commit any

<sup>1</sup> See Ludolf, p. 387. Lobo (Le Grand, p. 72) gives the name of *manta* to the mustard, which is made (he says) from the tripes of the animal, cooked with butter, salt, pepper, and onion. Like Poncet, he found the mixture detestable.

<sup>2</sup> Here should come the following: 'His discourse ran almost entirely upon the person of our King and the wonderful events of his reign. He told me that he had been charmed by the account given of him by one of his ambassadors on his return from the Indies, and that he regarded this great prince as the hero of Europe.'

excess, they admonish him of it, and at the very instant he rises from the table.

'Tis a matter of surprise that, in a country where there are excellent grapes, they drink nothing but metheglin. I wonder'd at it at first; but I was given to understand that wine made of grapes does not keep, by reason of the great heats; and, it being easily corrupted, the Emperour loves it no more than the people.<sup>1</sup> But everybody loves metheglin; which is made in this manner. They take barley and malt [*fait germer*] it. After that they parch it almost after the same manner that we do coffee, and then reduce it to powder. They do the same with a root which grows in that country and which they call *taddo*. They take a vessel that is varnish'd [*vernissé*], and to four parts of water they put one of honey; which they mix together, and to the weight of ten pound [*livres*] of this water they put two ounces of malt and two of *taddo*. They mingle all this. They let it work three hours in a warm place, stirring it sometimes; and after three days 'tis excellent metheglin, which, pure and clarify'd, has the colour of white Spanish wine. This liquor is very good; but it requires a better stomach than mine. It is strong; and they draw from it a brandy of equal goodness with ours.

The Empress<sup>2</sup> came after dinner to make a visit to the Emperor. She was cover'd all over with jewels, and magnificently cloath'd. She has a fair complexion and majestick port. As soon as she appear'd, all the rest of the court retir'd, out of respect. The Emperour stopp'd me and the religious man who serv'd me, for interpreter. Her Majesty consulted me about some of her ailments of which she complain'd; and after that ask'd whether the French ladies are handsome: what sort of cloaths they wear: and how they usually employ themselves.

The palace is great and spacious, and the situation very fine. It is in the middle of the town, upon a rising which overlooks the country round about. 'Tis almost a league in compass. The walls are of freestone, flank'd with towers, upon which are

<sup>1</sup> Lobo (Le Grand, p. 73) gives much the same reasons.

<sup>2</sup> Her name was Malakotawit. She was not Iyasu's legitimate wife, but his favourite concubine (Budge, vol. 11, p. 408). In the revolution of 1706 she took the part of her son against his father and was implicated in the murder of the latter (Mathew, pp. 69, 71).

rais'd great crosses of stone. There are four imperial chapels within the inclosure of the palace. They call them *Beit Christian*,<sup>1</sup> (as also the other churches of the empire), that is to say: 'houses of the Christians'. They are serv'd by a hundred religious persons, who have [also] the care of a college, where they teach the officers of the palace to read the Holy Scriptures.

The princess Helcia, sister of the Emperor, has a magnificent palace in the town of Gondar. It not being permitted in Æthiopia to princesses to marry foreigners, she is married to one of the greatest lords of the empire. She goes thrice a week to the palace, to visit the Emperor her brother, who has a great esteem and kindness for her. When this princess appears in publick, she is mounted upon a mule richly accoutred, having on each side two of her women, who carry a canopy over her. Four or five hundred women are round about her, singing verses in her praises and playing upon the tabor after a brisk manner, not disagreeable.

There are some houses at Gondar built after the European fashion; but the greatest part of the rest resemble a tunnel<sup>2</sup> with the mouth downwards. Altho' the extent of the town be of three or four leagues, yet it has not the beauty of ours; nor can it have, because the houses are only of one story and have<sup>3</sup> no shops. This does not hinder but that they have a great trade. All the merchants meet in a wide, spacious place to treat of their affairs. There they expose their merchandice to sale. The market lasts from morning to night. All sorts of commodities are sold there. Everyone has his own proper place, where he exposes upon mats what he has to sell.

Gold and salt are the money with which they traffick in that country. The gold is not stamp'd with the prince's image, as in Europe. 'Tis in wedges, which they cut according as they have occasion, from an ounce to half a dram (which is the value of thirty *sol/s* of our money). And, to the end they may not adulterate it, there are everywhere goldsmiths, who make

<sup>1</sup> Amharic *Beta kristyan*. This means a church, not a house.

<sup>2</sup> Lockman has 'cone'. The French word is *entonnoir*, which corresponds with our 'funnel'; but that there is no misprint is shown by the repetition of 'tunnel' on p. 144. The *Oxford Eng Dict* says that the latter word had once the sense of a shaft or flue of a chimney.

<sup>3</sup> This should be 'there are'.

tryal of its goodness. They make use of rock-salt for small money. It is as white as snow and hard as a rock. They dig it out of the mountain Lafta, and carry it into the Emperour's magazines; where they form it into bars, which they call *amoult*,<sup>1</sup> or into half bars, which they call *courman*.<sup>2</sup> Each bar is a foot in length and three inches [*pouces*] in breadth and thickness. Ten of those bars is worth three French *lures*. They break them according to the sum they have to pay, and they equally make use of this salt both for money and domestic occasions.<sup>3</sup>

There are about a hundred churches in the town of Gondar. The Patriarch, who is the head of the religion, and who dwells in a fair palace near the Patriarchal church, depends upon the Patriarch of Alexandria, by whom he is consecrated. He names all the superiors of the monasteries, and has an absolute authority over the monks, who are very numerous; for there are no other priests in Æthiopia, as there is no other bishop besides the Patriarch.<sup>4</sup> The Emperour bears a great respect to this head of his religion. He order'd me to make him a visit, and caus'd some curiosities to be given me, wherewith to present him. This prelate, whose name is *Abona Marcos*,<sup>5</sup> receiv'd me very civilly. He immediately put a stole about my neck; and, holding in his hand an enamel'd cross, he recited some prayers over my

<sup>1</sup> Amharic *amole*, with the meaning assigned.

<sup>2</sup> Amharic *kurman*, meaning a *quarter* of a bar (not a half).

<sup>3</sup> Hamilton says (vol. i, p. 25) 'The current small money of Ethiopia is salt, which is dug out of the mountains as we do stones from our quarries, which they break in pieces of several sizes, the largest weighing about 80 pounds, the others in 40, 20, 10, or 5 pounds; and are so expert in dividing it that they err not above 5 per cent (more or less) in their calculation of weight. Twenty pounds is in value about one shilling sterling. And those pieces of salt is the current money in their markets for provisions and likewise for cloth, when they buy a yard or two at a time. And when a merchant has got any considerable quantity by him, there are bankers to give gold for it.'

<sup>4</sup> 'The Christian community derived from and always remained remotely subject to the patriarchate of Alexandria. . . . The link with Alexandria was maintained through the metropolitan of the Ethiopian Church, known as the *abuna*. This prelate was invariably an Egyptian chosen from among the monks of the great Coptic monastery of St Antonios. He was consecrated to what would prove a life-long exile, he always remained in thought and speech a foreigner. Although there were sometimes other bishops, suffragan in quality, the *abuna* alone possessed the right to ordain priests and to consecrate' (Mathew, p. 11).

<sup>5</sup> His appointment was made in June 1692 (Bruce, vol. iii, p. 480; Mathew, p. 63).

head, as it were in token that for the future he wou'd look upon me as one of his flock and of his children.

The priests have a great power with the people, but sometimes they abuse it. The Emperour Ati Basili,<sup>1</sup> grandfather to this prince who at this time reigns so gloriously, caus'd seven thousand of them to be thrown headlong from the top of the mountain Balbau, for having revolted against him. One may judge of their great number throughout the empire, by what the predecessor of this present Patriarch one day told me: that at one ordination alone he had made ten thousand priests and six thousand deacons.<sup>2</sup> The whole ceremony of their ordination consists in this: that the Patriarch, being seated, recites the beginning of St. John's Gospel over the heads of those he designs to ordain [priests], and gives them his blessing, with an iron cross of seven or eight pound weight, which he holds in his hand. As to the deacons, he does no more than give them his blessing, without reciting the Gospel.

This present Patriarch's predecessor,<sup>3</sup> who had been Governor [i.e. tutor] to the Emperor, dy'd at the time I was at Gondar. Altho' he had been depos'd, for his manners not altogether so regular, yet this prince, full of gratitude for the good education he had given him, had always conserv'd a particular affection for him. He fell sick at Tenket, a country house belonging to him. The Emperor order'd me to go to him, and begg'd of me to preserve the life of a man for whom he had an affection. I staid two days with him to examine his sickness, and found him past cure. This determin'd me not to apply any remedy, that I might not lose my credit with an ignorant nation, which might perhaps have imputed to me his death, which happen'd two days after.

In my return I had one of the most extraordinary adventures of my whole life. As I was coming back to Gondar upon a mule (which is the ordinary way of travelling of the country), [accompanied by my domestics,] the beast took a fright and like a mad thing run away with me, without my being able to

<sup>1</sup> Fasilidas, who reigned from 1632 to 1667. 'Ati' is the Amharic *Atse* ('Emperor').

<sup>2</sup> Alvarez gives (p. 246) a lengthy account of one of these ceremonies.

<sup>3</sup> The *Abuna* Synnada (Mathew, p. 63).

hold him in. I past over with an incredible swiftness three very deep precipices<sup>1</sup> without any mischief. Methought that by the particular protection of God I was, as it were, nail'd to the mule, which rather flew than run. Mourat, whom the Emperour has sent ambassador into France, who is at present at Caire (where he awaits his orders), and all my servants were witnesses of this wonderful accident, which Father De Brevedent had foretold me before his death.

The Emperor was inconsolable upon the death of the old Patriarch. He put on mourning, which he wore six weeks, and for the two first weeks bewail'd him twice every day. The emperors of Æthiopia mourn in purple, as they do in France.

The horror which the Æthiopians have for the Mahometans and Europeans is almost equal. The occasion was this. The Mahometans, having render'd themselves powerful in Æthiopia in the beginning of the 16th age [*siècle*], made themselves masters of the government. The Abyssins,<sup>2</sup> not being able to support so hard and so odious a yoke as that of the Mahometans, call'd in the Portuguese to their assistance; who at that time were famous in the Indies, where they had newly establish'd themselves. These new conquerors were overjoy'd to find a free entrance into Æthiopia. They march'd against the Mahometans, encounter'd them, defeated them entirely, and resettled the imperial family upon the throne. So important a service render'd the Portuguese considerable at the court of Æthiopia.<sup>3</sup> Many of them planted themselves there and enjoy'd the principal employs. Their numbers encreas'd, corruption of manners crept in, and they gave themselves such liberties that they rais'd a jealousy [i.e. suspicion] in the Æthiopians that they design'd to make themselves masters of their country and subject it to the crown of Portugal. Upon this suspicion the people were in a fury against the Portuguese. They took up arms in all places and made a terrible slaughter of them, at the

<sup>1</sup> 'Chasms' is probably meant. The whole of the hill country is seamed with narrow gorges.

<sup>2</sup> Abyssinians, a term derived from *Habash*, the Arabic name of their country. This in turn is said to have come from Habashat, the name of an invading tribe (Mathew, p. 8).

<sup>3</sup> For the campaign of Cristovão da Gama in 1542 see Mathew (pp. 11, 37, &c.) and Mr. R. S. Whiteway's volume (Hakluyt Soc., ser. ii, vol. 10).

time they thought themselves most securely establish'd in that empire. Those who escap'd from this first commotion had a liberty allow'd to retire. There departed out of Æthiopia seven thousand Portuguese families, who dispers'd themselves thro' the Indies and upon the coasts of Africk. Some few remain'd in the country, and from these families do the white Abyssins descend who are amongst them, and from whence they pretend the present Empress (whom I mention'd before) draws her origin.

Mahometans are tolerated at Gondar, but 'tis in the lower part of the town and in a separate quarter. They are call'd *gebertis*, that is to say 'slaves' [see p 110]. The Æthiopians cannot endure to eat with them. They wou'd not eat even of meat that is kill'd by a Mahometan, nor drink in a cup they have made use of, unless a religious man shou'd bless it by reciting over it some prayers and shou'd breath[e] into it thrice, as it were to drive away the evil spirit. When an Æthiopian meets a Mahometan in the streets, he salutes him with his left hand, which is a mark of contempt.

The empire of Æthiopia comprehends a vast extent of country. It consists of several kingdoms. That of Tigie,<sup>1</sup> the Viceroy of which is call'd *Ganekos*, has four and twenty principalities under his dependance [i.e. jurisdiction]; they are as it were so many little governments. The kingdom of Agau<sup>2</sup> is one of the new conquests of the Emperor. It was formerly a commonwealth which had its peculiar laws and government.

The Emperor of Æthiopia has always two standing armies; the one upon the frontiers of the kingdom of Nerea,<sup>3</sup> and the other upon those of the kingdom of Goyame,<sup>4</sup> where the

<sup>1</sup> Tigiai, occupying the northern part of the country.

<sup>2</sup> The Agaus are a widely scattered primitive people, some of whom still preserve their ancient Hamitic tongue. A large number dwelt to the north west of Gojjam. The conquest of those parts is attributed to the Emperor Susenyos (1604-32), but Iyasu may have put down a rebellion.

<sup>3</sup> Also termed Narca or Enarea. It occupied the south-west corner of the kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> The present province of Gojjam, lying to the south of Lake Tana, in the bend of the Blue Nile. Lobo (Johnson's translation) says of it 'this province is inhabited by a nation of the Agaus, which but only call themselves Christians, for by daily inter marriages they have allied themselves to the pagan Agaus and adopted all their customs and ceremonies. These two nations are very numerous, fierce and unconquerable, inhabiting a country full of mountains, which are



richest gold mines are. They carry to Gondar whatever they draw from those mines. They refine it and work it into wedges, which they carry into the imperial treasury; from whence it is not produc'd but for the payment of the troops and the expences of the court.

The great power of the Emperour arises from hence: that he is absolute master of all the wealth of his subjects. He gives and he takes away, as he thinks fit. When the head of a family happens to die, he seizes upon all his real estate [*biens immeubles*]; of which he leaves two-thirds to the children as<sup>1</sup> heirs. He disposes of the other third to some favourite, who by that means becomes his feudatary and is oblig'd to serve him in time of war at his own expences and to furnish him with soldiers in proportion to the estate he gives. Whence it comes that this prince, who has almost an infinite number of feudataries, can in a short time and at a small expence raise powerful armies.

Throughout all the provinces there are certain offices, where an exact register is kept of all that falls to the crown by the death of the possessor, and which is afterwards distributed amongst feudataries. The manner of the Emperour's putting them in possession is this. He sends to the person he has made choice of to be his feudatary a head-band [*bandeau*] of taffeta, upon which are written these words in golden letter: 'Jesus, Emperor of Æthiopia, of the tribe of Judah,<sup>2</sup> who has always vanquish'd his enemies'. The officer himself who carries the order of the Emperour fastens in ceremony the head-band about the head of the new feudatary, and afterwards goes, accompanied with trumpets and kettle-drums and other instruments, and attended by some horsemen, to put him in possession of the estate with which the prince has thought fit to gratifie him.

The ancestors of the Emperour had used to have set days for appearing in publick. This prince has shak'd off that servitude. He goes abroad when he thinks convenient; sometimes in covered with woods and hollowed by nature into vast caverns . . . To these recesses the Agaüs betake themselves when they are driven out of the plains'

<sup>1</sup> Read 'or to the'.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 130. According to Le Grand (p. 253) the seal of the Negus bore the image of a lion holding a cross, and the words *Vicit Leo de Tribu Juda*.

mony and sometimes in a more private manner. When he appears in ceremony, he is surrounded by a considerable body of cavalry, upon a horse richly harness'd. A guard of two thousand men go before and follow him. Whereas the sun is so scorching in Æthiopia that it fetches off the skin from the face, unless one take some care to prevent it, the Emperour wears upon his head a past[e] board [*carton*] bent archwise and cover'd with a rich stuff of gold, which he fastens under his chin. This he does to avoid the trouble of an umbrella,<sup>1</sup> and to enjoy the benefit of the air before and behind. His most usual diversion is to discipline his troops and to exercise himself in shooting; which he does with so much dexterity that he is esteem'd the best marksman in his dominions.

The rains continue six months in Æthiopia. They begin in the month of April and ceas'd<sup>2</sup> not till the end of September. During the first three months the days are fair and clear; but as soon as the sun sets it rains unto sun-rising, which is commonly accompanied with thunder and lightning. The world has a long while been in search of the cause of the overflowing of the Nile, which happens regularly every year in Egypt. They have falsly ascrib'd it to the melting of the snow, for I don't believe that anyone has ever seen snow in Æthiopia. There needs no enquiring after any other cause than these rains,<sup>3</sup> which are in such abundance that it seems a deluge of water that falls. The torrents at that time swell extremely, and carry gold along with them, much more pure than that which they draw from the mines. The peasants pick it up with a great deal of care.

There is no country whatever better peopled nor more fertile than Æthiopia. All the fields, and even the mountains (of which there are a great number), are well cultivated. You may see whole plains cover'd over with cardamom and ginger, which has a most agreeable scent. This plant is here four times as big as that of the Indies. The multitude of great rivers which water Æthiopia, and which are always border'd with lilies, jonquilles, tulips, and an infinity of other flowers which

<sup>1</sup> Fr. *parasol*. The reference is to the roundel or sunshade, which was shaped like a modern umbrella but could not be closed.

<sup>2</sup> This should be 'cease'.

<sup>3</sup> Bernier had already said the same thing (pp. 142, 446), but apparently Poncet was unaware of this.

I never saw in Europe, render that country delicious. The forests are fill'd with orange trees, citron trees, jessemin, pomgranate trees, and severial other trees loaded with [beautiful] blossoms, which send forth a most fragrant smell. Amongst the rest there is a tree which bears a sort of roses much more odoriferous than ours.

I have seen in that country a very extraordinary animal.<sup>1</sup> 'Tis not bigger than one of our cats. It has the face of a man, and a white beard, its voice is mournful. This animal always keeps upon a tree; and they assure me that there it is brought forth and there it dies. It is so wild that it is not to be tam'd. When any one of these is taken which they have a mind to bring up, notwithstanding all their care it pines and dies with melancholy. They shot one of them in my presence, which stuck fast to a branch of a tree by twining its legs about it. It died some days after.

As soon as the rains are ceas'd, the Emperour is us'd to take the field. He makes war against the Kings of Galla and Changalla,<sup>2</sup> who are his most powerful enemies. These princes, who were formerly tributary to the empire of the Æthiopia, took occasion from the weakness of the precedent reigns to shake off the yoke and to live independent. This present Emperour has summon'd them to return to their former obedience, and upon their refusal has declar'd war against them. He has defeated them in several battles,<sup>3</sup> which struck such a terror into those people that, as soon as the army of Æthiopia appears in the field, they retire to the mountains, which are almost inaccessible, where they sell their lives dear, as often as they are attack'd. This was a most murdering war in the beginning, and a great number of gallant men perish'd daily, because the

<sup>1</sup> This is the common long-tailed monkey known as the *gureza* (*Colobus guereza*). Ludolf gives a picture of one, and describes it (p. 58) as 'very harmless and exceeding sportive, called in the Ethiopic [*Guz*'] language *fonker*, in the Amharic dialect *guereza* (which is a kind of marmoset), and in Latine *cercopithecus*'. *Cercopithecus* is used by Juvenal as a name for the Indian long-tailed monkey.

<sup>2</sup> The Gallas were the pagans to the south of Abyssinia. 'Changalla' seems to be the 'Shankala' of Ludolf (p. 12), viz. certain nomad tribes on the western side of the country and in Sennar. Some were of negroid extraction, others allied in blood to the Gallas.

<sup>3</sup> Budge (vol. II, 418) records a campaign against them in 1699.

soldiers poison their arms with the juice of a certain fruit, which resembles very much our red curran[t]s; so that, as soon as they had the misfortune to be wounded, their life was irrecoverably lost. The Æthiopians, being at their wits' end for the great losses they daily sustain'd, have of late found out a sure means to stop the effect of so violent a poison. They make a plaster of their urine, which they soften in the sand. That plaster, apply'd to the wound, draws out the poison with so much success that the sick person finds himself cur'd in a short time.

The Emperour, before he begins the campaign, proclaims the day of his setting out, and orders his tents to be pitch'd in a great plain within sight of the city of Gondar. They are very magnificent. That in which the Emperour lodges is of red velvet, embroider'd with gold. Three days after, His Majesty orders his two great silver kettle-drums to be carry'd about the town; then mounts on horseback and advances as far as Arrington, where the rendezvous is held of the whole army. The Emperour spends three days in making the review; after which he enters upon action, which does not last above three months. The armies are so numerous that I have heard it affirm'd that the army which the Emperour commanded in the year 1699 was between four and five hundred thousand strong.

The palace of Arrington<sup>1</sup> is not less stately than that of Gondar, which in the absence of the Emperour remains in a manner desert. Four or five thousand men are left there to guard the crown. This garrison is commanded by one of the principal officers [*ministres*], who is to remain constantly in the palace. My ill health hinder'd me from following the Emperour to the army. He return'd from thence some days before the Christmas holy days, which he solemniz'd in his capital city ten days later than our account, because the Æthiopians, as also the Christians of the East, have not yet reform'd their calendar. The Epiphany is in Æthiopia one of the most solemn feasts; which they call *Gottas*; that is to say: 'The Day of Washing',<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mathew mentions (p. 60) that Iyasu's father died at his summer palace at Aringo, but he does not locate that place.

<sup>2</sup> *Ghutas* is the Arabic word for 'baptism', and *Id al Ghutas* is Arabic for the Epiphany.

because they bath themselves that day, in memory of the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> The Emperour goes with all his court to Kaa; which is a palace not far from Gondar, where there is a magnificent bason of water which serves for that pious ceremony. At the solemn feasts, of which there is a sufficient number in Æthiopia, the Emperour causes a beef [i.e. ox] to be distributed to each officer, which sometimes amounts to two thousand.

We have been a long time in an error in Europe as to the looks and complexion of the Æthiopians; which proceeds from confounding them with the blacks of Nubia, their neighbours. The Æthiopians are naturally of a dun or olive colour. They are tall and graceful; the features of their countenance comely.<sup>2</sup> They have good eyes; and their nose<sup>3</sup> and lips not too big, and white teeth. Whereas the inhabitants of the kingdom of Sennar or Nubia are flat-nosed, thick-lip'd, with very black faces.

The habit of persons of quality is a silken vest, or of fine cotton cloth, with a sort of scarf. The citizens are clad in the same manner, with this difference that they wear no silk and that the cotton cloth they make use of is not so fine. As to the common people, they have nothing but a pair of drawers of cotton and a scarf which covers the rest of their body.

The manner of salutation in Æthiopia is very particular. They take one another's right hand and put them to their lips. They also take the scarf of the person they design to salute and wrap it about their body; so that those who wear no vests are half naked when they are saluted.

The Emperor calls himself Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Altho' he be not above one and forty years old, yet he has already a numerous issue. He has eight princes and three princesses. The Emperor has great qualities—a quick and piercing wit [i.e. intelligence], a sweet and affable humour, and the stature of a hero. He is the handsomest man I have seen in Æthiopia. He is a lover of curious arts and sciences; but his chief passion is for war. He

<sup>1</sup> See Hamilton (vol. 1, p. 25).

<sup>2</sup> Fr. *bien marqués*.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. *le nez bien pris*.

<sup>4</sup> Iyasu I (the Great) came to the throne in 1682 and was deposed and murdered in 1706 (Mathew, p. 71; Le Grand, pp. 172, 215; Budge, vol. ii, p. 408). For the principal events of his reign see the last-named work (loc. cit.).

is brave and undaunted in battles, and always at the head of his troops. He has an extraordinary love for justice, which he administers to his subjects with great exactness; but whereas he is averse to blood, 'tis not without reluctance that he condemns a criminal [to death]. Such eminent qualities make him equally fear'd and belov'd by his subjects, who respect him even to adoration. I have heard him say that 'tis not lawful for one Christian to shed the blood of another [without weighty reasons]; hence it comes that he will have exact and ample informations before he condemns a criminal to death. The punishment of the guilty is hanging, or losing their head. Some are punish'd with the loss of their goods; with a strict prohibition to all persons whatsoever to assist them, under severe penalties, or even to give them to eat or drink; which makes those miserable wretches to wander about like wild beasts. The Emperor, being very merciful, is not difficult in granting favour to those unfortunate creatures. 'Tis somewhat surprising that, the Æthiopians being so lively and passionate as they are, we scarce ever hear of murder or of those enormous crimes which fill us with horror. Besides religion, I am persuaded that the exact justice which is perform'd in that empire, and the great order that is kept there, contributes much to the innocence and integrity of their manners.

I had carried with me into Æthiopia a little chest of chymical medicines, which had cost me the labour of six or seven years. The Emperor inform'd himself exactly after what manner those remedies were prepar'd, and how they were to be applied: what effects they produc'd: for what distempers they were proper. He was not satisfied with only a verbal account of these things, but he order'd it to be taken in writing. But what I most admir'd [i.e. wondered at] was that he seem'd to be extremely pleas'd with the physical reasons I gave him of everything. I taught him the composition of a kind of bezoar,<sup>1</sup> which I always made use of with great success in intermitting fevers, as the Emperor and two of the princes his sons experienc'd. He was also curious to see after what manner I extracted essences. Upon this project he sent me to Tzemba,

<sup>1</sup> Bezoar stones were calcareous concretions found in the bodies of certain animals (especially goats). They were chiefly used as antidotes to poisons.

a monastery situated upon the river Reb, half a league from Gondar. The Abbot, whom the Emperor honours for his virtue and probity, receiv'd me with a great deal of civility. He is a venerable old man of fourscore and ten years of age, and one of the most learned of the empire. There I set up my stoves, and prepar'd all that was necessary. The Emperor came thither incognito. I made several experiments in his presence, and communicated to him many secrets, which he was wonderfully curious to know. I think myself oblig'd to advertise [i.e. warn] all those who shall be desirous to carry medicines into Æthiopia to take no other than chymical preparations, because electuaries and syrups easily corrupt under the Line, whereas essences and spirits are carry'd without spoiling, and conserve themselves notwithstanding the heat.

During the three weeks' time I staid with the Emperor at Tzembra, that curious prince often discours'd me concerning religion, and shew'd a great desire of informing himself of our belief and of knowing in what we differ from the religion of the Copts, which is that which is practis'd in Æthiopia. I endeavour'd to satisfy him as well as I cou'd; but I own'd freely that, having never study'd the more nice points of divinity, I had brought to him one of the ablest men of Europe, whether for the mathematicks or divinity. Upon that the Emperor gave a great sigh, and said to me in a feeling manner: 'I have had a great loss then.' I confess my heart was pierc'd at that moment with the most sensible grief, at the reflection that death had depriv'd me of my dear companion, F[ather] De Brevedent; for that father, who was engaging and a man of parts, wou'd advantageously have made use of so favourable an occasion to convert that great prince and to instruct him thoroughly in the belief of the Catholick Church.

One day, as the Abbot of the monastery, my interpreter and I were alone with the Emperor, he press'd me to deliver my sentiments clearly concerning the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> I answer'd him that we don't believe the human nature of Jesus Christ to be lost and absorpt in the divine nature, as a drop of water is lost and absorpt in the sea (which is the opinion of the

<sup>1</sup> A question much disputed in the Abyssinian Church at that time (Mathew, pp. 13, 63).

Copts and Æthiopians, as the Emperor own'd), but that we believe that the Word, who is the second person of the most blessed Trinity, was truly made man, in such manner that that Man-God, whom we call Jesus Christ, had two natures the divine, in quality of the Word and second person of the most holy Trinity, and the human nature, in the which he has appear'd true man, has truly suffer'd in his body, and has freely and voluntarily suffer'd death for the salvation of all mankind When I had done speaking, the Emperor turn'd to the Abbot and (as much as I cou'd guess) entertain'd himself with him upon what I had said They did not shew any surprise, and I am perswaded they are not averse to the sentiments of the Catholick Church upon that point From that time the Abbot gave me greater marks of his kindness than before During the stay which the Emperor made at Tzemba, one of his most usual diversions was to see the pages ride the great horse and perform their exercises, at which those young men are very expert

From Tzemba to the heads of the Nile 'tis not above sixty French leagues I had a design to visit those famous springs, so much discours'd of in Europe, and the Emperor was pleas'd to appoint me a troop of horse to attend me thither by way of convoy But I cou'd not take the advantage of so favourable an occasion, being then much indispos'd with a weakness of breast, with which I have a long time been afflicted I begg'd of Mourat, one of the prime [i.e. chief] ministers of the Emperor and uncle to the ambassador I spoke of, to give me an account of them Mourat is a venerable old man, of a hundred and four years of age, who for the space of more than sixty years has been employ'd in the most important negotiations to the Mogul and the rest of the courts of the Indies <sup>1</sup> The Emperor has so great a consideration for him that he commonly calls him *Baba*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Abyssinian embassy to Aurangzeb in 1663-5, to congratulate him on his accession, is described by Manucci (vol. II, p. 110), Tavernier, and others, but the best account of it is given by Bernier (Constable's transln., p. 133). There were two ambassadors—one a Muhammadan merchant, and the other 'an Armenian and Christian merchant, born and married at Alep[po], and known in Ethiopia by the name of Murat'. The latter Bernier had met at Mocha on his outward journey, and he notes that the Armenian was sent annually to that port by the Negus with presents to the English and Dutch East India Companies, taking back with him the articles presented in return.

<sup>2</sup> *Baba* is Turkish for 'father' (used also in Egyptian Arabic)



*Mourat*, that is to say 'Father Mourat'. Observe what this minister, who has often been at the heads of the Nile and who has been curious in his remarks,<sup>1</sup> relates concerning them.

In the kingdom of Goyame there is a very high mountain, on the top of which are two plentiful springs [*sources d'eau*], the one towards the east, the other towards the west. From these two springs are form'd two streams, which, towards the middle of the mountain, precipitate themselves into a spongy and boggy ground, cover'd over with canes and reeds. These waters disappear until, ten or twelve leagues off, being reunited, they form the river Nile, which in a little time is swell'd by the waters it receives from several other rivers. What is particularly wonderful is that the Nile passes thro' the middle of a lake without mixing its waters. This lake is so great that they call it *Bahal Dembea*, that is to say 'the Sea of Dembea'.<sup>2</sup> The country round about is very delicious. On all sides you see nothing but large boroughs and fine woods of laurel. Its

<sup>1</sup> A closer translation is: 'has examined them with care.' It is interesting to compare the account in the text with that given to Bernier (Constable's transn., p. 141) at Delhi by Murād and his fellow ambassador, both of whom had been at the sources of the Blue Nile. Thus, he says, confirmed what he had already gleaned at Mocha. It runs: 'They informed us that the Nile has its origin in the country of the Agans [*should be* Agaüs], rising from two bubbling and contiguous springs, which form a small lake of about thirty or forty paces in length, that the water running out of this lake is already a pretty considerable river, which continues, however, to increase in size by reason of the small tributary streams which, from here and there, flow into it. They added that the river went on in a circuitous course, forming, as it were, a large island, and that after falling from several steep rocks, it entered into a great lake [i.e. Tana], wherein are several fertile islands, quantities of crocodiles, and (what would be much more remarkable, if true) numbers of sea-calves [*veaux marins*] . . . This lake is in the country of Dumbia, three short stages from Gonder and four or five from the source of the Nile.'

It would indeed be remarkable if seals were found in an inland lake, but in all probability the term used by Bernier's informants (or the interpreter) was not *veaux marins* but *chevaux marins*, meaning hippopotamuses.

Le Grand gives descriptions of the sources by Lobo (p. 106) and (p. 209) by Pedro Paez, a Spanish Jesuit, who was the first European to visit the spot (1618). Ludolf (p. 36) confirms Paez's account on the testimony of the Ethiopian Gregory. Bruce's description is, of course, well known. For more modern accounts see Beke's article in the *Geographical Journal* for 1844, and especially Major Cheesman's book.

<sup>2</sup> This is the well-known Lake Tana (Tzana). Ludolf's map shows the river crossing the lake. Bruce gives 'Bahar Tzana (the Sea of Tzana)' as an alternative name of the latter.

length is of about a hundred leagues, and its breadth between thirty five and forty.<sup>1</sup> Its water is sweet and pleasant, and much lighter than that of the Nile. Towards the middle of the lake there is an island, where the Emperour has a palace, which for the beauty and magnificence of its buildings yields not to that of Gondar, altho' it is not so big.<sup>2</sup>

The Emperour made a voyage thither, and I had the honour to attend him. He pass'd over in a little boat, row'd by three watermen. Mourat, the minister's nephew, and myself follow'd in another. These boats,<sup>3</sup> which hold not above six persons, are compos'd of mats of rushes, join'd very neatly, and without being tarr'd or pitch'd. Altho' the rushes of these boats are platted very close [*gaudronnees*], yet I cannot conceive how these boats can be proof against the water.

We stay'd three days in this charming palace, where I made some chymical experiments with which the Emperour was much pleas'd. This palace has a double inclosure of walls, and two churches, which are serv'd by religious that live in community. One of these two churches is dedicated to St. Claude and gives the name to the island, which is call'd 'the Isle of St. Claude',<sup>4</sup> and has almost a league in compass.

One of the three days of our being in that place, notice was given to the Emperour that four river-horses [*hyppopotames, ou chevaux de riviere*] appear'd upon the lake. We had the diversion to behold them for half an hour. They drove the water before them, and darted themselves up very high. The skin of two of those animals was white, and of the two others red.<sup>5</sup> Their heads resembled that of a horse, but their ears were shorter.

<sup>1</sup> Modern measurements are greatest length, 47 miles, greatest breadth, 44 miles, area, 1,100 square miles. A detailed account of it is given by Major Cheesman in his *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile*.

<sup>2</sup> Cheesman mentions Iyasu's summer palace on Chikla Manzo, but says that that island is only half a mile from the mainland. It was whilst lying ill there that Iyasu was murdered by the emissaries of his rebellious son. His tomb may still be seen on the island of Mitraha.

<sup>3</sup> 'Little cock-boats, made of thick water torch or cats-tail' (Ludolf, p. 45). Alvarez mentions them in his account of the lake (p. 150). They are still used.

<sup>4</sup> Ludolf gives (p. 45) the names of eleven islands, but none resembles this. He says that all but one 'are possessed by the monks'.

<sup>5</sup> This is, of course, an error. The real colour is a dark brown, though, seen at a distance and with dazzling sunlight reflected from a wet surface, the illusion of white or red might be given.

I could not frame a judgment of the rest of their bodies, having only seen them confusedly. Those river-horses are amphibious creatures, which come out of the river to feed upon the grass of the banks, from whence they often carry away goats and sheep, which they eat.<sup>1</sup> Their skin is much esteem'd. They make bucklers of them, which are proof against a musket or lance. The Æthiopians eat the flesh of these animals, which must needs be unwholesome food.

The manner of taking them is this. As soon as they discover one, they follow him with sword in hand and cut his legs, not being able any longer to swim, he comes to the riverside, where he bleeds to death. The Emperour commanded a canon to be shot against these river horses, but not being nimble enough in shooting, the animals div'd into the water and disappear'd.

From the Isle of St. Claude the Emperour went to Arrington, a place of strength [*guerre*] which I have already mention'd, and I took the road of Emfras, which is one day's journey from Gondar. The town of Emfras is not so big as Gondar, but it is more pleasant and in a finer situation. The houses themselves are better built. They are all separated one from another with quick-hedges, always green and cover'd with flowers and fruit and mix'd with trees planted at an equal distance. This is the idea you ought to frame of the greatest part of the towns of Æthiopia. The Emperour's palace is seated upon an eminence, which commands the whole town.

Emfras is famous for the traffick of slaves and civet. They rear such a prodigious number of those animals that some merchants have to the number of three hundred. This is a sort of cat, which is fed with some difficulty, they give it thrice a week raw beef, and on other days a kind of milk pottage. They perfume this animal from time to time with sweet odours, and once a week they gently scrape of[f] an unctious matter which issues from the body with the sweat. 'Tis this excrement which

<sup>1</sup> The hippopotamus is not carnivorous. Ludolf says (p. 61) 'There are many of them in the lake of Tzana, which infest the neighbouring fields, to the great damage of the corn. They overturn small boats, which renders all passage by water very unsafe to the inhabitants, in regard they lye in wait for the men themselves. Some poor people there are that make it their livelihood to hunt them and feed upon their flesh. Their skins, being very thick, are employ'd for several uses, especially to make shields.'

they call civet, from the name of the beast. They put it up carefully into a beef's horn, which they keep well stopt.

I arriv'd at Emfras at the time of their vintage; which they do not gather in autumn, as in Europe, but in the month of February. I saw bunches of grapes which weigh'd eight pound [*livres*], and of which each grape was as big as a large nut. There are of all colours. The white grapes, altho' well tasted, are not esteem'd there. I ask'd the reason, and I guess'd, by their way of answering, that it was because the Portuguese are of that colour. The religious persons of Æthiopia inspire into the people so great an aversion to the Europeans (who are white in comparison of them) that they make them despise, and even hate, all that is white.

Emfras is the only town of Æthiopia where the Mahometans have publick exercise of their religion, and where their houses are mix'd with those of the Christians.

The Æthiopians have only one wife;<sup>1</sup> but they cou'd wish it were allow'd them to have more, and to find something in the Gospel which might authorize that opinion. At the time I was at Tzembra with the Emperour, he ask'd me what I thought of it. I answer'd that plurality of wives is neither necessary for man nor pleasing to God, seeing God created only one wife for Adam; and that our Saviour alluded to it [*vonloit marquer*], when he told the Jews that Moses had not permitted plurality of wives only for the hardness of their heart, but from the beginning that it had not been so. The religious of Æthiopia are very severe against those who have several wives; but the lay judges are much more indulgent.<sup>2</sup>

The Æthiopians make profession of Christianity. They admit the Scripture and the sacraments. They believe the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. They invoke the saints [*comme nous*]. They communicate under both species, and consecrate with leaven'd bread, like the Greeks. They observe four Lents (as

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton (vol. 1, p. 25) says: 'one wife, but as many concubines as they please.'

<sup>2</sup> The elder Murād told Bernier a somewhat different story at Delhi (p. 142): 'He said that in Ethiopia there are few men who do not keep several wives; nor was he ashamed to confess that he himself had two, besides the wife to whom he was legally married, and who resided in Aleppo.'

the Orientals): the Great Lent, which lasts fifty days: that of St. Peter and St. Paul, which continues [sometimes] forty days, and sometimes less (according as the Feast of Easter is more or less advanc'd): that of the Assumption of our Lady, which is of fifteen days: and that of Advent, which lasts three weeks. In all these Lents they abstain from eggs, butter, and cheese; and they do not eat till after sunset; but after that they may eat and drink till midnight. There being no olive trees in Æthiopia,<sup>1</sup> they are forc'd to make use of an oil which they draw from a certain grain of the country, which is not unpleasant to the tast. They fast likewise, with the same rigour, all the Wednesdays and Fridays of the year. Prayer always goes before the repast. [An hour before sunset] the peasants leave their work to go to prayer; not offering to eat until they have acquitted themselves of that duty. They dispense with nobody from fasting; the old and the young, and even sick persons, are all oblig'd to its observance. They usually admit children to communion at ten years old; and from the time of their communion they oblige them to fast.

The confession of their sins is very imperfect. The manner of doing it is this. They prostrate themselves at the feet of a priest, who is seated; and then they accuse themselves in general of being great sinners and having meritted hell, without descending to the particular sins they have committed. After this declaration the priest, holding in his left hand the book of the Gospels and a cross in his right, touches with the cross the eyes, the ears, the nose, the mouth, and the hands of the penitent, reciting some prayers over him. After that he reads the Gospel, makes several signs of the cross over him, gives him a penance, and dismisses him.

The Æthiopians have much more modesty and respect in their churches than they commonly have in Europe. They don't enter into them but with bare feet; 'tis for this reason the pavement is cover'd with carpets. You never hear them speak a word, nor blow their nose, nor turn their head on one side. When they go to church they must always have clean linen; otherwise they would refuse entrance to those that should present themselves. When they give the communion everyone

<sup>1</sup> Presumably he means cultivated. The wild olive was common (see p. 152).

retires, and nobody remains in the church but the priest and the communicants. I know not whether or no they practise this thro' a sense of humility, as believing themselves unworthy to partake of the divine mysteries.

Their churches are very neat. They make use of pictures and painting[s]; but you never see any statues or carv'd images. However, the Emperour was pleased to accept of a crucifix of imboss'd work, which I had the honour to present to him, with some other pictures in miniature. He kiss'd them with respect, and order'd them to be carry'd into his closet. Those miniatures were the pictures of saints; whose names he order'd to be written at the bottom in the Æthiopick language. Upon this occasion he told me we were all of the same religion, and only differed in certain rites.

They offer incense almost continually during the Mass and the offices. Altho' their books have no musical notes, yet their singing is true and agreeable. They mix with it the sound of instruments. The religious rise twice in the night to sing psalms. Out of the church their habit is almost secular; they are only distinguish'd by a yellow or blue [*violette*] calot [cap: *calotte*] which they wear upon their heads. Those different colours distinguish their orders. They are much reverenc'd in Æthiopia.

The Æthiopians have retain'd the Jewish circumcision. They circumcise the child the seventh day after its birth, and afterwards baptize it; unless there be danger of death, for in that case they wou'd not defer baptism. Circumcision does not pass amongst them for a sacrament, but a pure ceremony which they practise in imitation of Jesus Christ, who vouchsafed to be circumcis'd. They assur'd me that former Popes had tolerated this use of circumcision in Æthiopia, declaring to them that they were to believe that circumcision is not necessary for salvation.

I cou'd add many other curious things in relation to Æthiopia; but not being perfectly inform'd, and being unwilling to advance anything which I have not either seen myself or learn'd from unquestionable witnesses, I shall forbear making any further remarks.

Finding daily a decay of my health by continual relapses, I took a resolution to return into France and to beg leave of the

Emperor to depart. He express'd a true concern at my intimation of it. He renew'd his orders to treat me well, fearing that I was dissatisfy'd. He offer'd me houses and lands, and even a very considerable settlement [*établissement*]. But whatever inclinations I had to serve so amiable a prince and endow'd with so great qualities, I represented to him that, from the time I had that severe sickness at Barko (which had like to have carry'd me off), I had never been able to set myself up again, notwithstanding all the remedies and precautions I had taken: that it was impossible for me to recover my health without changing the climate and breathing my own native air: that it was the greatest affliction to me imaginable to be separated from so great a prince, but that I should infallibly die in case I shou'd wilfully continue in his dominions. The Emperor, full of goodness, agreed, tho' with difficulty, to my pressing solicitation. But it was upon this condition, that, as soon as I shou'd be recover'd, I wou'd return into Æthiopia; and, that he might engage me by all that is most sacred, he made me swear upon the holy Gospel that I wou'd not fail in the promise I had given, and that I wou'd observe it inviolably.

The esteem he had conceiv'd for the King [of France], upon what I had related and upon what he had learn'd from other hands, mov'd him to desire an alliance with a prince whose reputation made so great a noise in the world, and to send an ambassador to him with letters and presents. He cast his eyes immediately upon an abbot, whose name was *Abona*<sup>1</sup> Gregorios and to that intent he order'd me to teach him the Latin tongue. This religious man, having a great deal of wit and being perfect both in speaking and writing Arabick,<sup>2</sup> made a very considerable progress in a little time. But because in Æthiopia they more willingly make use of strangers than people of their own country for embassies, it was no difficult matter for the minister Mourat to procure his nephew to be nam'd ambassador for France. The Emperor declar'd him publicly, and order'd him to prepare his presents, which consisted in elephants, horses, and young Æthiopian children, etc.

<sup>1</sup> Probably a mistake for *Abba* (cf. p. 153).

<sup>2</sup> Poncet was doubtless sufficiently versed in that language, after spending some years in Cairo.

Being at an audience with the Emperor before he was resolv'd upon his choice of an ambassador, he call'd for the young princes his children and, directing his discourse to one of the youngest (about eight or nine years old), told him he had a mind to send him into France, the finest country in the world. The young prince answer'd him, very wittily, that it wou'd be the greatest concern in the world to him to be separated from his father, but that, if it were his pleasure he shou'd make that voyage, he wou'd undertake it with joy. Then the Emperor, turning to me, ask'd me after what manner they wou'd treat his son at the court of France. I answer'd they wou'd treat him with all the honours due to the greatest and most powerful prince of Africk. 'He is as yet too young', reply'd the Emperour, 'and the voyage is too long and difficult. When he is grown stronger and has more years over his head, he may undertake it.'

My departure being fix'd, the Emperour gave me an audience of leave, with the usual ceremonies. When I was in his presence the Grand Treasurer brought me a bracelet of gold, which the Emperour graciously put about my wrist, with sound of kettle-drum and trumpets. This honour in Æthiopia answers to that of the princes of Europe, when they bestow their orders of knighthood. He after that gave me the mantle of ceremony; and it being dinner time, did me the honour to keep me and make me eat at a table near his own, but which was lower. After dinner I took leave of the Emperour, who order'd the High Treasurer to furnish me with whatever I shou'd demand.

My departure was resolv'd on for the second of May of the year 1700. They gave me an officer with a guard of a hundred horse to conduct me as far as the confines of the empire, and an interpreter who knew the languages of all the provinces thro' which we were to pass, for every province has its particular language. Several merchants who were going to Messua [Massawa] join'd themselves to me, and were glad to have the advantage of this occasion to perform their voyage with more security. Altho' the ambassadour Mourat press'd my departure, for fear of the rains, which already began to fall in the nights, he cou'd not begin his journey so soon, because the Emperour



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stopt him. We appointed to meet at Duvarna [see p. 146], to continue our journey together from thence.

I cou'd not leave the Emperour (who shew'd me a thousand kindnesses) without a tender concern; and he himself appear'd to be sensibly touch'd at this separation. I must own that I can never think upon that great prince without the most lively sentiments of gratitude; and had it not been for my indisposition I shou'd have devoted myself to his person and sacrific'd the remainder of my days to his service. The principal lords of the court did me the honour to accompany me two leagues, according to the orders they had received.

We took our journey by the town of Emfras, of which I have already spoken. The officer who conducted us always got an hour before us into the places where we were to lodge. He alighted at the Governour's house, or at the principal person's of the village, and shew'd him the orders of the court, written in a roll of parchment. This roll is put into a little gourd, which he fastens to his neck with silken strings. As soon as he arrives, the chief of the town or place meet together before the Governour's gate, where in their presence he unties his gourd and takes out of it the little roll of parchment, which in the language of the country is call'd *Ati Heses*,<sup>1</sup> that is to say 'the command of the Emperor'. He presents it with a great deal of respect to the Governour, telling him that, if he does not execute it, his head must answer for it. When any order is upon pain of death, 'tis written in red letters. The Governour, to testifie his respect and obedience, takes it and puts it upon his head. After that, he gives his orders to defray the expences of the officer and his company thro' all the places of his government.

We made it a day's journey between Gondar and Emfras; being oblig'd to pass over a high mountain by very difficult ways.<sup>2</sup> Upon that mountain there is a fair monastery, with a

<sup>1</sup> Col. Eadie says that *Ate* is always followed by the name of the emperor, and so the translation given in the text is wrong. There is a possibility that *heses* represents *izz* ('order'), but, if so, a name has been omitted.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce thinks (vol. III, p. 499) that Poncet's memory failed him and that he did not go either to Emfras or to Coga on this occasion, for both places would have been out of his route. Possibly, however, the deviation was due to some cause left unexplained.

church dedicated to St Ann. This place is very famous, and they make pilgrimages to it from afar. In this monastery there is to be seen a very clear and cool fountain; the pilgrims drink of it out of devotion. They pretend that it works miraculous cures, by the intercession of St Ann, to whom the Æthiopians are much devoted.

We arriv'd at Emfras on the third of May, and were lodg'd in a fair house belonging to Mourat the elder. I was regal'd there for three days. I was entertain'd with consorts of the harp and a kind of violin, which comes very near our own. I was present at a sort of show. The actors sing verses to the honour of him they design to divert, and shew a thousand tricks of activity. Some of them dance jigs [*ballets*] to the sound of little cymbrels;<sup>1</sup> and, being nimble and active, make several extravagant postures in their dancing. Others, holding a naked sabre in one hand and a buckler in the other, represent a battle dancing, and cut such surprising capers that one wou'd not believe it without seeing. One of those caperers brought me a ring and bid me either hide it myself or give it to some other to hide, and that he wou'd soon tell me where it was. I took it and hid it so well that I thought it impossible to guess where I had put it. A moment after, I was much surprised to see this man come dancing to me (keeping time all the while) and whisper me in the ear that he had the ring and that I had not hid it well. Again, there are others who hold a lance in one hand and a glass of metheglin in another, and leap prodigiously high without spilling one drop.

They desir'd me to visit a person of quality that was sick. One of the standers by said to me in my ear '*Misch*',<sup>2</sup> that is to say 'he is struck by the evil spirit'. At the time I was at Gondar I heard them often speak of that illness; and the Emperour himself more than once ask'd my opinion concerning it. I answer'd that God did not permit those obsessions, but either to punish our sins or to discover his power.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The French text has *tymballes* (i.e. kettledrums).

<sup>2</sup> Col. Eadie observes: '*Misch* is good Amharic. It means a violent illness with fever and is usually fatal in a short time. The literal meaning of *misch* is "blow" (cf. English "stroke").'

<sup>3</sup> The French text goes on: 'that we had an infallible remedy in the sign of the cross: and that the Devil had no power over a true Christian. It is in cases like

From Emfras we advanc'd to Coga; where we took up our lodging. This place was formerly the residence of the Emperors of Æthiopia. The town is little, but the situation very delightful, and the country roundabout very pleasant. I took up my quarters with the Governour of the province, who receiv'd me very honorably; as also did the other governours and heads of the villages with whom I lodg'd thro' all my journey. 'Twas at Coga where they first began to recommend our baggage to the lords of the villages; who order'd it to be carried as far as the frontiers, after the manner I have already related.

I have not exactly noted down the places thro' which we pass'd; the great weakness I then lay under not permitting me to write as I cou'd have wish'd. We spent seven or eight days in passing thro' the province of Ogara;<sup>1</sup> where the heats are not so excessive as elsewhere, by reason of the many high mountains. I was told they had ice there at certain times of the year; but I dare not engage for the truth of it. Amongst those mountains there are houses which are made in the very rock. They shew'd me a place where some young people, seeking a private place to be merry in [*pour faire la débauche*], were all petrefied. Those who related this passage to me affirm'd that those young libertins are still to be seen in the same postures they were in when they were turn'd into stone. I believe those figures are only congelations [i.e. petrifications], in which Nature sports herself sometimes.

There are amongst those mountains so great a number of houses that they seem to be one continu'd town. They are built round [*en rond*]. The roof, the figure of which resembles a tunnel [see p. 121] turn'd downwards, is of rushes, and supported by walls which rise ten or twelve foot from the ground. The inside[s] of the houses are neat, and adorn'd with Indian canes rang'd artificially. Markets are to be found everywhere, where they sell all sorts of provisions and cattle. The country swarms with people.

these that the exorcisms of the Catholic Church are very necessary for effecting cures. One has often seen in these schismatic countries the wonderful efficacy of the prayers of which that Church makes use on such occasions.'

<sup>1</sup> South of Tigray and east of Bagemdir.

Out of the province of Ogara we enter'd into that of Siry; where they begin to speak the language of Tigra. Before we came to Siry,<sup>1</sup> the capital of that province, we pass'd over the river Tekesel [see p. 112], which is to say 'the terrible'. That is the name they give it, by reason of its rapid stream. 'Tis four times broader than the Seine at Paris. They pass over it in boats; there being no bridge.

This province is the most pleasant and most fertile country I have seen in Æthiopia. You meet there with delicious plains, water'd with fountains and fill'd with spacious forests of orange trees, citron trees, jessamins, and pomegranate trees. Those trees are so common in Æthiopia that they grow without any care or cultivating. The meadows and fields are cover'd with tulips, renunculus's, pinks, lilies, rose trees (loaded with red and white roses), and a thousand other sorts of flowers unknown to us, and which perfume the air with a much stronger and more fragrant scent than in those pleasant places which are to be seen in Provence.

The officer who conducted me has in that province a very handsome castle [*chasteau*], where he regal'd me eight days. I began in that place to observe that the swelling [*tumeur*] I had at the orifice of my stomach grew less, and that exercise and the country air gave me an appetite and wrought a very good effect upon me. I receiv'd in this castle the visit with which the Governour of the province honour'd me, by the Emperour's appointment. He commanded a young elephant to be brought, which the ambassador was to carry into France and present to the King. The orders, which were put into little gourds, were to that effect.

From the province of Siry we pass'd into that of Adova, the capital whereof<sup>2</sup> bears the same name. The Governour of this province is one of the seven prime ministers of the empire. The Emperour has marry'd one of his daughters to a son of this Governour, who has four and twenty little governments

<sup>1</sup> Shire (lat. 14° 15', long. 38° 15'). According to Bruce, the province of that name 'reaches from Axum to the Tacazze. The town of Sire is situated on the brink of a very steep, narrow valley.'

<sup>2</sup> Aduwa, famous for the crushing defeat of the Italians in 1896. It is a little over 100 miles south-south-west of Massawa, and lies at a height of 6,400 feet. Salt has a description of it (p. 424)

and principalities under his jurisdiction. As soon as we were arriv'd at his capital city, he order'd a magnificent tent to be set up in his palace for my reception. He lodg'd me in a very fine apartment, and regal'd me the space of sixteen days that I staid with him, with a magnificence worthy of his rank and quality. It was he who had orders to furnish me plentifully with all that I should want for my embarking upon the Red Sea; and he did it in the most obliging manner in the world. I was treated (by way of regale) with wild beef [*boeuf sauvage*], which is much esteem'd by the Æthiopians; the flesh is very good and very tender. Those beefs have no horns, and are not so large as ours in France. There are also a great number of roebucks in this province; but I saw there neither hinds nor stags.

After having return'd thanks to that lord, who overwhelm'd us with civilities, we continu'd to pursue our route. We pass'd thro' a forest full of apes of all sizes, which skip'd upon the trees with an amazing swiftness, and which diverted us with a thousand tricks they play'd. After that we enter'd into the province of Saravi,<sup>1</sup> where I had the misfortune to see the young elephant die, of which I had taken the charge. In this province are the best horses of Æthiopia, and from whence the Emperour's stables are furnish'd. From hence the embassadour was to take the horses he was to carry with him into France. Those horses, which are full of fire and are as big as those of Arabia, are always high crested [*ont toujours la teste haute*]. They have no shooes, because in Æthiopia they know not what it is to shooe horses or other beasts of burden.

From Saravi we at length arriv'd at Duvarna,<sup>2</sup> the capital of the kingdom of Tigra. There are two Governours in this province. I know nothing of the reason, nor which are there [i.e. their] several divisions. They call them *Barnagas*, as much as to say 'kings of the sea';<sup>3</sup> probably because they border upon the Red Sea.

Duvarna is divided into two towns, the higher and the lower.

<sup>1</sup> 'Sarawe' is mentioned by Ludolf as one of the districts under the 'Bahr-nagas'.

<sup>2</sup> 'Dobarwa' in Ludolf and Bruce; 'Barua' in Alvarez, 'Debaroa' in modern maps. It is about 50 miles south-west of Massawa.

<sup>3</sup> Properly 'king of the sea' (*bahr-nagas*). The office was originally held by one man

The Mahometans inhabit the lower Whatever comes into Æthiopia by the Red Sea passes thro' Duvarna. This town, which is about two leagues in circuit, is as it were the bureau or<sup>1</sup> general magazine of the commodities of the Indies. All the houses are built with square stone[s] and the roofs are flat. The river Moraba, which passes at the foot of this town, disburthens itself into the Tekesel<sup>2</sup> It is not broad, but very rapid and not to be pass'd without some danger. We spent no less than two months and a half between Gondar and this town, where I was to wait for the coming of Mourat

Soon after my arrival the two Governours receiv'd the doleful news of the death of Prince Basil,<sup>3</sup> eldest son of the Emperour and presumptive heir to the empire. This prince, who dy'd between nineteen and twenty years old, had all the qualifications that can render a prince accomplish'd Besides that he had a very graceful person, he had wit, courage, worth, and a generous and liberal heart, all which made him the delight of the whole court. A malignant fever carry'd him off within eight days after his return from a campaign he had been making with the Emperour his father against the Gallas, where he had signaliz'd himself, for he had beat and pursu'd his enemies so briskly that he had kill'd eight with his own hand This prince had a tender love for the people, to whom he wou'd have been a father, had he liv'd. He gave demonstrations of this a little before his death. The Emperour going to visit him, attended by the greatest lords of his court, the prince told him he had only one favour to beg of him, which was that he wou'd ease his people, which was oppress'd and drain'd by the insatiable avarice of the ministers and governours. These words made such an impression upon the Emperour that he cou'd not forbear weeping; promising him that he wou'd take care to remedy it. I learn'd this circumstance from him that brought the news of his death to Duvarna, with orders to pray for the deceas'd prince, and to bewail him according to custom.

What they relate concerning his vertues is worthy of eternal

<sup>1</sup> This should be 'and'

<sup>2</sup> The Mareb (or Gash) rises about 50 miles from Annesley Bay, and flows in a northerly direction past Kassala to Fillik, and there usually disappears in the sands, though in very wet weather a small stream reaches the Atbara

<sup>3</sup> Fasil (an abbreviation of Fasilidas)



memory. The Emperor his father being one day fal'n into an ambuscade of the enemies, the young prince ran with full speed to his assistance. He pierc'd into the thickest crowd, charg'd so warmly on all sides, and did actions of so great valour that he sav'd his father's life at the hazard of his own. The Emperor, whether thro' policy or by way of diversion, disguises himself sometimes and keeps out of sight, with two or three of his confidants, without anyone's knowing what is become of him. It happen'd once that he absented himself for two months; which made the prince his son highly uneasy and gave him terrible apprehensions, because it was believ'd that the Emperor was dead. Some of the most considerable lords of the court, who desir'd to advance themselves by flattering the ambition of the young prince, propos'd to him to take the government into his hands and to order himself to be proclaim'd emperor, because there was danger lest in the present conjuncture one of his brothers might prevent [i.e. forestall] him and raise an insurrection in some of the provinces: that he might rely upon their fidelity: and that they were ready to sacrifice their lives and fortunes in his service. The prince, who had a tender love and an inviolable attach[ment] to his father, rejected with indignation the proposal of these self-interested courtiers, and declar'd that he wou'd never mount the throne before he had seen the corps of his father and was assur'd of his death. The Emperor return'd some days after and was inform'd by some loyal courtier of the pernicious counsel that had been given to his son. He, being extremely wise and reserv'd, made no noise of it; but those flatterers soon disappear'd, without having been seen ever since.

The presumptive heir of the crown has a principality annex'd to his person. I past by this principality in my journey to Duvarna. The town is call'd Heleni.<sup>1</sup> It has a fair monastery and a magnificent church. 'Tis the fairest and largest I have seen in Æthiopia. It is dedicated to St Helena, and from that church in all likelihood the town has taken the name of Heleni.

<sup>1</sup> According to Bruce this was the name of a nearby village. The place was really Aksum, the ancient capital of Abyssinia. It lies about 5 miles north-north-east of Aduwa, at a height of over 7,000 feet. For a description see Bent's *Sacred City of the Ethiopians*

In the middle of the spacious place before the church are to be seen three pyramudical and triangular spires,<sup>1</sup> all fill'd with hieroglyphicks. Amongst the figures of these pyramids I observ'd upon each face a lock [*serime*], which is very singular, for the Æthiopians have no locks and are even unacquainted with the use of them.<sup>2</sup> Altho' you see no pedestals, yet these spires are no less high than the obelisk of the place before St Peter's at Rome, plac'd upon its pedestal. 'Tis believ'd that this was the country of the Queen of Saba [*i e* Sheba], several villages depending upon this principality which to this day bear the name of Sabaim. They get marble in the mountains which no ways yields to that of Europe, but what is more considerable is that they also find a great deal of gold, even in tilling their ground. They brought me privately some pieces, which I found to be very fine. The religious of that church are habited in yellow skins, and wear a little cap of the same colour and skin.

After the arrival of the courier who was the messenger of the sad news of Prince Basil's death, the *Barnagas* order'd it to be made publick with sound of trumpet thro' all the towns of their government. Everyone put on mourning, which consists in shaving their heads, this is the practice thro' the whole empire, not only for men but also women and children. The day following, the two Governours, attended by all the militia<sup>3</sup> and an infinite number of people, went to the church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, where they perform'd a solemn service for the prince, after which they return'd to the palace in the same order. The two *Barnagas* seated themselves in a great hall, and plac'd me in the middle between 'em. After that, the officers and persons of note, both men and women, rang'd themselves round the hall. Certain women with tabors, and men without, plac'd themselves in the middle of the hall and

<sup>1</sup> *Asgullas de granite*, meaning obelisks. Bruce says that for hieroglyphicks we should read carvings. A striking photograph of these obelisks is given in Jones's work (p. 34).

<sup>2</sup> Bruce corroborates this. He saw on one side of an obelisk 'the representation of a wooden door, lock, and a latch to it, which first seems designed to draw back and then lift up, exactly in the manner those kind of locks are fashioned in Egypt at this very day' (vol. III, p. 501). Bruce's statement is confirmed by Bent (p. 184). Long before, Alvarez had noted the same carving (p. 83).

<sup>3</sup> *Fr milice* (soldiers).

began to sing, as it were in parts, little songs in honour of the prince; but in so doleful a tone that I cou'd not hinder being seiz'd with grief and weeping for a whole hour that the ceremony lasted. There were some who, to testify their sorrow, tore their faces till they were cover'd with blood, or burnt their temples with little wax candles. There were none in this hall but persons of quality. The common people stood without in the courts, where they gave such lamentable cries that it wou'd have mov'd the hardest hearts. These ceremonies lasted three days, according to custom.

It is to be observ'd that, when any *Æthiopian* dies, you hear on all sides most doleful howlings. All the neighbours assemble in the house of the person deceas'd, and join in their bewailings with the kindred they find there. They wash the corps with particular ceremonies; and after having wrapt it up in a new winding-sheet of cotton, they place it in a coffin in the middle of the hall with flambeaus of wax. Then they redouble their weeping and crying, to the sound of little tabors. Some pray to God for the soul of the deceas'd; others recite verses to his praise, or tear their hair and scratch their faces, or burn their flesh with flambeaus, in token of their grief. This ceremony, which is both frightful and moving, continues until the religious come to take away the body. After having sung some psalms and made use of incense, they begin their procession, holding an iron cross in their right hands and a prayer book in the left. They themselves carry the body, and sing psalms all the way. The relations and friends of the deceas'd follow, and continue their cries, with drumming on the tabors. They all have their heads shav'd, which is the badge of mourning, as I said before. When they pass by any church, the procession stops and some prayers are said there; after which they go on to the place of burial. There they renew again their oblations of incense. They sing awhile the psalms, with a mournful note, and put the body into the ground. Persons of fashion are buried in the churches; the rest in common churchyards, where they plant a number of crosses, not unlike to what is practis'd by the *Carthusian Fathers*. The company returns back to the house of the deceas'd, where they make a feast. They meet together for three days, night and morning, to bewail, and eat nowhere

else during that time. After three days they separate until the eighth day after the decease; and so continue to meet every eighth day, to mourn for two hours, for the space of a whole year, to the anniversary day.

When a prince or some person of eminent quality dies, the Emperor for three months withdraws himself from business, unless it be very pressing. Whereas [i.e. since] he was desirous of sending an ambassador into France, he sent for Mourat, gave him his orders and credentials to the King, and, having clothed him with a mantle of ceremony in a publick audience, commanded him to depart. His voyage [i.e. journey] was unfortunate. The horses which he was to present to the King died in the way; Mourat sent back to court to be furnish'd with others. This accident retarded his journey, and made me take the resolution to go and wait for him at Messua [Massawa], there to give orders for our embarking. The day before my departure the *Barnagas*, having sent back the troops which had conducted me to Duvarna, appointed a hundred foot soldiers, with an officer on horseback to command them, to be in readiness to march the next day to convoy me to Messua. I sent back part of my domesticks, only keeping thirty.

I left Duvarna on the eighth of September of the year 1700, and with much difficulty and danger I pass'd over a very rapid river call'd Moraba [see p. 147]. From Duvarna the lords of the villages don't order the baggage to be carried by their vassals, but make use of a kind of oxen which they call *bers* [i.e. *bare*], and are of a different species from those called *frida* [i.e. *firida*], which are the ordinary oxen. Those animals, the flesh whereof is not good to eat, rid a great deal of ground in a short time. I had twenty of them for my use; of which one part carried the great provisions for our vessel,<sup>1</sup> and the other our tents; because, after the rains had ceas'd, we lay every night in the fields. The inhabitants of that country, who are partly Mahometans and partly Christians, bring in victuals and provisions to the caravans that pass.

I was informed that, about a day's journey out of our road, there was a very extraordinary thing to be seen in one of the

<sup>1</sup> Food and other necessaries for the voyage had to be provided by the passengers themselves.

most famous monasteries of the country. I was curious to examine the truth of it in person. I left the highway, and took with me twenty lance-men and the officer, for greater security of this little excursion. We spent half a day in climbing a very difficult mountain, all covered with wood. When we were come to the top of it, we found a cross and the monastery we search'd for.

This monastery is in the middle of a forest, in a frightful solitude. It is well built and has a wide extended prospect; you discover from thence the Red Sea and a vast country.<sup>1</sup> There are a hundred religious in this house, who lead a very austere life and who are habited in the same manner as those of Heleni. Their cells are so little that a man can scarce stretch himself in one of them. They eat no flesh, no more than the other religious of Æthiopia. They are constantly intent upon God and the meditation of holy things; this is their whole employment. I saw there an old man of about sixty-six years of age, who for seven years had only liv'd upon the leaves of wild olive trees. This extraordinary mortification had occasioned his spitting blood, which incommoded him very much. I gave him some remedies and prescrib'd him a diet not altogether so rigorous. He was a very handsom man and well bred, brother to the Governour of Tigra. The Abbot of the monastery receiv'd us with a great deal of charity. As soon as we arriv'd, he wash'd our feet and kiss'd 'em, whilst his religious recited certain prayers. After this ceremony, they conducted us in procession to the church, the religious singing all the while. Then we were led into a chamber, where a refreshment was brought us. The whole regale was only a piece of bread sopp'd in butter and beer, for in that convent they drink neither wine nor metheglin; nor does wine ever appear, but for the saying of Mass. The Abbot kept us company all the while, but did not eat with us.

I no sooner enter'd the church but I discover'd the prodigy which gave the occasion to my journey, and which I cou'd

<sup>1</sup> Bent, who visited Bizen and its monastery in 1893, speaks (p. 44) of the position of the latter as 'one of the grandest in the world, situated as it is on an isolated peak, 6500 feet above the sea and commanding a view over endless kindred peaks right down to the blue waters of the Red Sea.' He gives a picture of the monastery (p. 53) Salt calls it 'Bisan', and marks it in his map about 30 miles south-west of Massawa.

never have believ'd. They assur'd me that on the epistle side<sup>1</sup> was to be seen, pendulous in the air, a round staff [*baguette*] of gold, four foot in length and of the thickness of a good stick. This prodigy appear'd so wonderful to me that I was afraid lest my eyes might be impos'd upon and that there might be some artifice which I cou'd not discern. I therefore begg'd of the Abbot to permit me to examine more nearly whether there were not some invisible prop or support. For my better assurance and to take away all doubt, I pass'd my cane [*un baston*] over it and under it and on all sides, and found that this staff of gold did truly hang of itself in the air. This rais'd an astonishment in me which continues to this very day, finding no natural cause of so wonderful an effect.

The religious recounted to me the history of it, in the manner I am going to relate. 'Tis about three hundred and thirty-six years', said they, 'since an anchorit [hermit: *solitaire*], nam'd *Abona*<sup>2</sup> Philippos (or Father Philip), retir'd himself into the desert [*ce desert*]. He fed only on herbs and drank nothing but water. The reputation of his sanctity spread itself on all sides. He made several predictions which were verifi'd by the event. One day, as this anchorit was in contemplation, Jesus Christ appeared to him, and commanded him to build a monastery in that part of the wood where he shou'd find a staff of gold hanging in the air. Having found and seen the miracle of which you are witness', said he who address'd his discourse to me, '*Abona* Philippos doubted no longer of the will of God. He obey'd, and built this monastery; to which they have given the name of *Bihen Jesus* (that is to say: "the Vision of Jesus") by reason of the apparition.' I leave to the reader to make what reflexions he pleases upon the prodigy I have seen and upon what those religious report concerning it.<sup>3</sup>

The next day, having taken leave of the Abbot and the religious, who did me the honour to accompany me a good

<sup>1</sup> Meaning the side of the altar from which the epistle was read during Mass.

<sup>2</sup> An obvious error. Evidently the correct term is *Abba* (Father), which Alvarez uses (p. 34).

<sup>3</sup> Alvarez, who visited the monastery in 1520 and has given a full description of it, makes no mention of any golden staff or of the legend concerning it. He saw the tomb of Philip, and says that he was regarded as a saint, but on quite different grounds (p. 34).

part of the way, I went to rejoyne the caravan I had left, and so continu'd my journey. I saw nothing in the rest of my route which deserves any particular remark.

Eight days after we had left Duvarna we arriv'd at Arcouva,<sup>1</sup> a little town on the bank [*bord*] of the Red Sea, which the geographers miscall Arequies. We only staid one night. The day following we cross'd an arm of the sea in a boat and landed at Massoua,<sup>2</sup> a little island (or rather a barren rock), upon which is built a fortress which belongs to the Grand Signior, and is the residence of a bacha [*i.e.* pasha]. This fortress is of small strength, and a single man of war, well mann'd, wou'd easily make itself master of it. Whilst I was there, an English vessel came to an anchor in the road; which cast a terror into the whole island. They were preparing for their defence, when the master of the vessel sent his longboat ashore to assure the Governour he had no cause to stand in fear of the English, who were in alliance with the Grand Signior.

The Bacha of Messoua gives a governour to Suaquen [Suakin], a town depending upon the Ottaman Empire, situated upon a bank of the Red Sea. In this place is the pearl-fishing and for tortoises,<sup>3</sup> of which there is a great traffick, and from whence the Grand Signior draws a considerable revenue.

The Bacha of Messoua receiv'd me with much civility, at the recommendation of the Emperour of Æthiopia, whom they stand in great fear of in that country, and with reason; for the Æthiopians cou'd easily make themselves masters of the place (which formerly belong'd to them) by starving them or refusing to furnish them with water; the inhabitants of Messoua being oblig'd to fetch it from Arcouva, there being none in their island.

At the time I was at the court of Æthiopia, I was inform'd that the Hollanders had attempted more than once to engage in commerce with the Æthiopians. But, whether it be difference

<sup>1</sup> Arkiko, on the mainland, opposite to the island of Massawa

<sup>2</sup> Massawa, the well-known port on the Red Sea. Hamilton (vol. 1, p. 25) describes it as 'situated on the north-west end of a large island, and affords a very good harbour for shipping of any size. It has a garison of about 250 Turks (in a castle built formerly by the Portuguese), who, according to their impolite custom, oppress strangers as well as natives, that come there to trade'

<sup>3</sup> See Bruce's account (vol. 11, p. 246).

in religion or whether it be the great power of the Hollanders in the East-Indies, that gives them a jealousy [i.e. suspicion], 'tis certain the Æthiopians wou'd never enter into any league with them.<sup>1</sup>

The English are also desirous of making alliance with the Æthiopians, and to my knowledge an Armenian merchant<sup>2</sup> did associate himself to the English in hopes to trade thither; which wou'd be of great advantage to them, for, besides gold, civet, elephants' teeth, &c., they wou'd bring from thence aloes, myrrh, cassia, tamarinds, and coffee; which the Æthiopians do not esteem much, and which (as I have been told) was transported out of Æthiopia into Hiemen [i.e. Yemen] or Arabia Felix, from whence the merchants nowadays bring it, for at present they cultivate it in Æthiopia only as a curiosity.

The coffee plant resembles very much the myrtle. Its leaves are always green, but larger and more tufted. It bears a fruit like the pistacho-nut, and on the top a husk, in which are contain'd two beans, and this is what they call coffee. This husk is green at the beginning, but as it grows more ripe becomes of a darker colour [*brune*]. 'Tis a mistake that they put coffee into boiling water to prevent the growth of it<sup>3</sup> (as some have affirm'd). They shell it from the husks in which it grows, and send it away without more ado.

The delays of the ambassadour Mourat gave me some uneasiness, because I apprehended to lose the mousson. I writ to him that I had taken a resolution to go and expect [i.e. await] him at Gedda [Jidda]. He answered me that I might go thither, and that he wou'd endeavour to come to me: that the death of Prince Basil and the disappointments he had met with in his journey had hindred him from joining me. So I dismiss'd my domesticks, and rewarded them after such a manner as to give them an esteem for the French. They melted into tears and were all desirous to follow me, but I wou'd not permit it.

<sup>1</sup> The French text adds here: 'and I have heard them say they would never trust any Christians who did not fast, or invoke the saints, or believe that Christ is really present in the holy sacrament.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Named Agapyri' (ibid.). See p. 169 for this incident.

<sup>3</sup> '*Pour en gaster le germe.*' The suggestion was that the berries were boiled in order to sterilize them and prevent their use as seed in the cultivation of the plant in other countries.



After that I took leave of the Bacha of Messoua, and I embarked on the 28th of October on board a vessel that had been built at Surate. I had no mind to hazard myself in the ships of the country, which appear'd to be very slight and unsafe, the planks, altho' pitch'd and tarr'd, being only fasten'd together with pitiful cords, as well as the sails, which are only made of mats of the leaves of dome.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding, these vessels, altho' so ill rigg'd out and worse govern'd, carry a great weight, and altho' they have not above seven or eight men to manage them, they are of great use in all that sea.

We arriv'd within two days after our departure from Messoua at a little island called Deheleq.<sup>2</sup> The vessels which come from the Indies commonly put in there for fresh water and to lay in provisions, of which there is great plenty, except of bread, which the inhabitants often want themselves, living for the most part upon flesh and fish. We staid eight days in this island, by reason of contrary winds, but as soon as the wind was favourable we pass'd over into another island called Abugafar [Abū Ghaffār] (which signifies 'Father of pardon').<sup>3</sup> The captain did not fail to go ashore and carry a flambeau to the tomb of the wretch Abugafar. The Mahometans wou'd be in fear of a shipwreck shou'd they omit it, and they often turn out of their route to visit this pretended saint. We sail'd afterwards in full sea amongst the shelves [*ecueils*, i.e. reefs], which lie near the surface of the water and are very frequent, which makes that voyage very dangerous. But the pilots, who are well acquainted with them, pass amongst them boldly, notwithstanding their frequency. We arriv'd on the sixth day at Kautumbul.<sup>4</sup> 'Tis a very high rock in the sea, half a league from the *terre à feu* of Arabia. We there cast anchor between the sands and the shore, where we pass'd that night. The next day we coasted Arabia and came to an anchor at Ibrahim Mersa,<sup>5</sup> that is to say 'The

<sup>1</sup> 'Domi' in the French text. For its meaning see p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Dahlak, the chief of a group of islands lying off the entrance to Massawa.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce (vol. II, p. 253) terms it Dahalottom, remarking that Poncet 'mistakes the name of the saint for that of the island'.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce (vol. II, p. 199) calls this island Kotumbal, and places it in lat. 17° 57' N, 2 miles from the Arabian coast. It is the islet of Qadimbal, near the island of Farasān.

<sup>5</sup> Marsa Ibrahim, near Al Lith, which is 12 miles north east of the Farasan Bank. *Marsa* is Egyptian Arabic for 'anchorage'.

anchorage of Abraham' After that we continu'd our route, and after eight days' sail we put in at Confitia [Qunfidha see p 178] 'Tis a pretty town, belonging to the King [i.e. Sharif] of Mecca and the first port of his dominions towards the south They willingly trade hither, because they pay only one duty to the customhouse here, whereas they pay double elsewhere. There are large storehouses, in which they put the goods they unload and which are afterwards to be carry'd by land, upon the backs of camels, to Gedda <sup>1</sup>

We lay eight days at anchor at Confitia to refresh ourselves and in expectation of a fair wind 'Twas<sup>2</sup> a town of great traffick, being frequented by a great number of Mahometan merchants (Arabians, and Indians) They do not admit of the Indian idolaters <sup>3</sup> Provisions are cheaper there and in greater plenty than at Gedda, where we arriv'd on the fifth of December of the year 1700 From Kautumbul to Gedda we only sail'd in the daytime, and cast anchor in the nights, by reason of the shelves

Gedda is a large town upon a bank [*sur le bord*] of the sea, half a day's journey from Mecca The harbour (or rather the road) is pretty secure, altho' it has the northwest in the mouth of it [*pour traverser*] The bottom is sound enough in some places, and lesser vessels find water enough to be afloat, but the bigger cannot come up within a league I went ashore, and was lodg'd in an oquel <sup>4</sup> An oquel is built with a large apartment three stories high at each corner, with a court in the middle <sup>5</sup> The lowest story is to lay up the stores and provisions, passengers make use of the upper floors There are no other inns in this country, no more than in Turkey There are several of these oquels at Gedda As soon as a traveller alights, he seeks out for chambers and a place for his baggage, for which he pays to the master a set price, which never encreases nor

<sup>1</sup> Jidda The French text adds 'which is distant from five to six days'

<sup>2</sup> This should be "'Tis'

<sup>3</sup> Meaning Hindu traders

<sup>4</sup> An inn, of the type described by Pitts on p 13 The name has not been traced Possibly it was a local term not recorded in the dictionaries, or else, as Mr Beckingham conjectures, Poncet is confusing the proper word with *ukl* (meaning meals or eatables)

<sup>5</sup> The French text reads '*Ce sont quatre grands corps de logis a trois etages, avec une cour au milieu*'

diminishes. I gave four crowns a month for two chambers, a garret,<sup>1</sup> and a kitchen. These oquels are sanctuaries and sacred places, free from insults and robberies. What is most inconvenient there is that you are unprovided of all things; so that you must buy your own furniture, buy and dress your own meat, unless you have servants to do it for you.

Two days after my arrival at Gedda, the King of Mecca came thither with an army of twenty thousand men. He pitch'd his tents and encamp'd at the gate of the town which leads to Mecca.<sup>2</sup> I had a sight of him. He is a man of about sixty years of age, of a majestick presence, and somewhat of a ghastly look. He has a slit in his under lip on the right side. His subjects and neighbours do not much commend his sweetness and clemency. He oblig'd the Bacha, who resides at Gedda for the Grand Signior, to give him fifteen thousand crowns of gold, and threatened him with military execution [*de le chasser*], if he did not forthwith obey. He also extorted upon all the merchants that were subjects of the Grand Signior and are settled there for trading, and forc'd them to pay thirty thousand crowns of gold. He distributed those two sums amongst his troops, who are always numerous and which makes him master of the country. There come every year caravans from the Indies and from Turkey, in pilgrimage to Mecca. There are some very rich ones, for the merchants join themselves to those caravans, to convey their merchandice from the Indies into Europe and from Europe into the Indies. When those caravans arrive at Mecca, there is held a great fair, where an infinite multitude of Mahometan merchants meet, with all the most precious commodities of the three quarters of the world; which they barter together. In the years 1699 and 1700 the King of Mecca took a frolick [*s'avisa*] to pillage the caravans of the Indies and Turkey. This prince calls himself Cherif,<sup>3</sup> or 'noble by excellence' [*noble par excellence*], pretending to be descended from the prophet Mahomet. The Grand Signior was for a long time in possession of giving the investiture of this kingdom; but the<sup>4</sup> Cherif, who is a fierce and haughty man, has withdrawn

<sup>1</sup> '*Une terrasse*' (ibid.), meaning an open space in front of the suite of rooms.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 74 for Daniel's account of this raid.

<sup>3</sup> *Sharif* (noble).

<sup>4</sup> Should be 'this'.

himself from subjection to the Grand Signior, whom he calls by way of contempt *elon mamluq*,<sup>1</sup> as much as to say 'son of a slave' [*une esclave*].

Medina is the capital of his kingdom. 'Tis renown'd for Mahomet's tomb, as Mecca is famous for his birth. The King does not often reside at Medina, because he is almost always at the head of his armies. The Turks, when they come to Medina, pull off their cloaths, out of respect, only keeping a scarf to wrap about their wast. They come three or four leagues in this equipage. Those who are unwilling to submit to this law pay a sum of money to procure a sacrifice to God in honour of Mahomet.

Gedda is not a place where the Christians can make any settlement, particularly the Franks [i.e. Europeans], by reason of the neighbourhood of Mecca; the Mahometans wou'd never endure it. Nevertheless, there is great trading thither, for all the vessels which return from the Indies come to an anchor there. The Grand Seignior does usually employ 30 great vessels in those seas for the transportation of merchandizes. Those ships, which might be fitted for a hundred pieces of canon, have none at all. Everything is dear at Gedda, even as much as water, by reason of the great concourse of so many different nations. One pint of water, of our measure of Paris, wou'd cost twopence or threepence [*deux ou trois sols*], because 'tis brought four leagues off. The walls of the town are good for nothing. The fortress, which is towards the sea, is somewhat better, but would not be able to bear a siege, altho' it has some pieces of canon for its defence. The greatest part of the houses are built of stone, and are flatroof'd after the eastern manner.

I was shew'd, upon the bank of the sea, about the distance of two musket shot [from the town], a tomb which they assured me to be that of our first mother Eve [see p. 34]. The country round about Gedda is very unpleasant. There is nothing to be seen but barren rocks and uncultivated places full of sand. I was desirous to see Mecca, but 'tis forbid to Christians to appear there upon pain of death. There is no river between Gedda and Mecca, as some have erroneously affirm'd; there is

<sup>1</sup> This should be *ibn mamlūk*.

only a fountain, from whence they fetch the water that is drunk at Gedda.

After a month's stay in this town, I receiv'd advice that the ambassador Mourat cou'd not come so soon as he design'd, and that, if he lost the opportunity of the mousson, he wou'd be forc'd to remain a year longer in Æthiopia. This determin'd me to a resolution of embarking upon those vessels which were preparing to go to Suez, and to visit Mount Sinai, where Mourat appointed me to wait for him, in case he cou'd not come to Gedda.

On the twelfth of January of the year 1701 I went on board some vessels which the Grand Signior had caus'd to be built at Surate. Altho' those ships are very large, yet they have only one deck, and the sides are so high that the tallest man cannot reach them, altho' standing. The cables are very thick and hard. Their masts and sails don't differ much from ours. What is particular [i.e. peculiar] in these vessels is that they have such large conservatories [*chambres*] or cisterns that they can keep five months' provision of water for a hundred and fifty men. Those cisterns are so well varnish'd on the inside that they preserve the water much more pure and clear than our casks which are us'd in Europe.

We had a great deal of difficulty to disengage ourselves from those banks of sand<sup>1</sup> that are round about Gedda and of which that sea is full. This oblig'd us to keep near to the shore, which we had on our right hand. Every night we cast anchor, not to run upon the banks, which the pilots of those seas avoid with a wonderful dexterity. They are to be seen on all sides near the surface of the water, and those pilots pass boldly thro' them, by the great experience they have from their very infancy; for several of those mariners are born in the vessels, which may be look'd on as floating magazines.

After five or six days' sail, we came to an anchor before the isle of Hassama, two leagues from the *terra firma*. This place is not inhabited, but it furnishes excellent water. From thence to Suez they cast anchor every night near the land, and the Arabs are not wanting to bring in refreshments.

Twelve or thirteen days from our leaving Hassama we

<sup>1</sup> '*Écueils*' (reefs) in the French text.

got into the road of Yambeau [Yenbo]. This is a pretty considerable town, defended by a castle which is on the bank of the sea, the fortifications of which are worth little. It belongs to the King of Mecca. I did not go to take a view of it, because [of] the Arabs, who make incursions on all sides into those quarters, rob passengers, and abuse those who go ashore.

A contrary wind stopt us eight days in this road. Two days after our departure from Yambeau, we cast anchor between two shelves, and there we sustain'd so furious a tempest that two of our cables broke, which put us in great danger of being lost. But the tempest had no long continuance.

Mieula<sup>1</sup> was the next place we came to. 'Tis a town much of the same bigness as Yambeau. It has also a castle, but of little defence.

From thence we pass'd on to Chiurma.<sup>2</sup> This is a very good haven, where ships are sheltred from tempests. In this place there is neither town nor village, but only some tents in which the Arabs dwell. 'Twas the 22d of April before we reach'd Chiurma, by reason that the contrary winds retarded us. The mousson being advanc'd, I despair'd of holding out longer at sea, and therefore I landed at Chiurma. There I took camels, which brought me to Tour in six days.

Tour belongs to the Grand Signior. It has a garrison in the castle, with an Aga who commands there, and a great number of Grecian Christians in the village. They have a monastery of their own rite, which depends upon the great monastery of Mount Sinai.

I was informed in this place that the Archbishop of the monastery of Mount Sinai, who was paralytick and who had been advertis'd of my arrival at Gedda, had left orders at Tour to engage me to give him a visit. I began my journey, and took the route towards that famous monastery; where I did not arrive till after three days' travelling through impracticable ways and very difficult mountains. The monastery of Mount Sinai is situated at the foot of the mountain. Its gates are constantly wall'd up for fear of the incursions of the Arabs.

<sup>1</sup> (Al-) Muwailih: see p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Sherm (see p. 79).

They drew me up by a pully with cords, and my baggage in like manner.

I immediately paid my respects to the Archbishop, who is a venerable old man of fourscore and thirteen years of age. One half of his body was struck with the dead palsy. I cou'd not but pity his condition. I had been acquainted with him some years before at Caire, having had him under cure for a dis-temper, of which I recover'd him. I had the good fortune at this time to set him up so as to be able to say Mass in his pontificals upon Easter day; which he had not done of a long time.

This monastery is solidly built, with good and strong walls. The church is magnificent.<sup>1</sup> 'Tis the work of the Emperour Justinian, as the religious affirm. There are to the number of fifty, without reckoning those who go abroad to beg alms. Their life is very austere. They drink no wine and never eat flesh, not so much as in the time of their greatest sickness. The water which they drink is excellent. It comes from a spring which is in the middle of the monastery. Thrice a week they are allow'd a little glass of strong waters, which they extract from dates.<sup>2</sup> They fast very rigorously the four Lents which are observ'd by the Eastern Church. At other times they live upon herbs and roots and salt fish. They rise in the night to sing the divine office, and spend the greatest part of it in the quire. They shew'd me a shrine of white marble,<sup>3</sup> in which is deposited the body of St Catharine, which they do not expose to view; they only shew a hand of the saint (which is much dry'd), the fingers whereof are full of gold rings.<sup>4</sup> The Archbishop, who is also Abbot of the monastery, has under him a Prior, whose power is not great, unless the Archbishop be absent.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Baedeker, p. 202, Burckhardt's *Syria*, p. 541, and Von Harff, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Baedeker says (p. 202) 'the monks are prohibited from partaking of meat and wine, but they are permitted to drink a liqueur which they prepare from dates ('Araki)'

<sup>3</sup> The French text adds 'covered with a rich cloth of gold.'

<sup>4</sup> When Fabri visited the shrine (c. 1483), only about half the body remained (the rest having been given away in response to demands for relics). Von Harff (p. 142) saw the head and certain limbs.

<sup>5</sup> Baedeker says (p. 202) 'the monastery is presided over by an archbishop, who when absent is represented by a prior or wakil, but the affairs of the monas-

I had the curiosity to go up to the top of the mountain, as far as the place where God gave the two tables of the Law to Moses. The Archbishop had the goodness to order some of his religious to bear me company. We mounted at least four thousand steps before we came to the top of that famous mountain, where they have built a pretty neat chapel. We afterwards visited the chapel of Elias.<sup>1</sup> We took a breakfast at the fountain, and then, having well tir'd ourselves, we return'd to the monastery. The neighbouring mountain is yet higher. I had not the courage to go to it, not being quite recover'd of the weariness of my first day's journey.<sup>2</sup>

I waited a month in this monastery in expectation of the embassadour Mourat. I began to be tir'd and to despair of seeing him, when unexpectedly word was brought me that he was not far off and was coming towards the monastery. This news gave me a sensible joy. I went to meet him, and presented him to the Archbishop, who receiv'd him with a great deal of civility. He related to me all the misfortunes of his vovage. He gave me to understand that the death of Prince Basil had for a while retarded his departure: that the Emperour, however, notwithstanding his excessive grief, had given him audience and his dispatches [*l'avait expédie*] that he had halted at Duvarna to wait for new orders from the Emperour. He recounted to me the ill usage he had receiv'd from the King of Mecca, who had taken from him the Æthiopian children he was to carry into France, and that, to compleat his misfortunes, the vessel on board which were the presents had been cast away near Tour that nine large vessels, laden with coffee, were detain'd in that port, because they came out too late and had lost the opportunity of the mousson. This disappointment made coffee very dear at Caire, those vessels not having been able to reach Suez, where they unlade their merchandice, to take in other lading, as, for example, linen cloth, corn, rice and other provisions,

tery are actually managed by an interdant ('oikonomos')'. This was the case at the time of Burchhardt's visit.

<sup>1</sup> 'A plain white stone building, containing two chapels dedicated to the prophets Elijah and Elisha' (Baedeker, p. 206). See also Von Harff p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> The French text adds 'it was to this second mountain that the body of St. Catherine was carried by angels after her martyrdom'. Von Harff refers to this story (p. 95).



which they draw from Caire, in exchange for those of the Indies.

After that the ambassador Mourat had rested himself for five days at Mount Sinai, we return'd into the route of Tour, where we rejoin'd his retinue and equipage. We staid only one night in that haven, and the next day continu'd our journey by land; coasting it for the most part by the seaside untill we came to Suez, where we arriv'd in five days.

Suez is a little town at the further end of the Red Sea. 'Tis the haven that belongs to Caire, from whence it is distant about three days' journey. This town is commanded by a castle built after the ancient fashion and ill fortify'd. It has a Governour, with two hundred men in garrison, and excellent magazines. The country round is no ways pleasant; where you see nothing but desarts fill'd with rocks and sand. This town is as unprovided of water as Gedda, but it is here at a more reasonable rate, tho' they bring it from afar.

At my coming to Tour I writ to Monsieur Maillet, the French consul at Caire, to notify to him the arrival of the ambassador. He sent to me to make all the haste I cou'd to Caire. I obey'd, and took the opportunity of the first caravan that parted [i.e. set out]. It was compos'd of about eight thousand camels. I myself mounted upon a dromedary; and having kept company for three leagues with the caravan, I gave them the slip and got in four and twenty hours to Caire.<sup>1</sup> Those dromedaries are less [i.e. smaller] than camels; their pace is hard, but very swift; and they travel four and twenty hours together without stop or stay. They make no other use of them than to carry men.

At my coming to Caire, I gave an account of my voyage to our consul, and order'd a handsome house to be made ready for the reception of the ambassador, who arriv'd two days after. Monsieur Maillet sent him at his arrival all sorts of refreshments, and came to an agreement with him that I shou'd pass on to France, to inform the court of what I have here related.

I cou'd write many more particulars in relation to Æthiopia, and give an account of the government of that great empire, of their religion, offices [*charges*], tribunals of justice, and even

<sup>1</sup> On 20 June 1701 (see p. 170).

of botany itself and physick; but it would be necessary for this that I enjoy'd that repose which is always greedily sought for after such long and painful voyages, and that the air of France had restor'd me my health, of which we do not taste the sweetness untill it be perfect; for we physicians, who cure others, oftentimes have not the art to cure ourselves.

FINIS.

## DE BRÈVEDENT'S ACCOUNT OF THE JOURNEY TO SENNAR<sup>1</sup>

FATHER BRÈVEDENT wrote from Sannaar. His letter is dated 15 February 1699; I believe it is the only one received from him. In it he gives an account of his journey. He says that they set out from Cantara (on the banks of the Nile) the second of October; that they spent five days in crossing the desert that begins at that spot; that they found no water until they came within a day's march of Helaone, which is a large village inhabited by Turks,<sup>2</sup> commanded by a *Chaik* who has thirty other small villages under his control; that they took two days over the journey from Helaone to Chab, and three more from Chab to Selime. At that point one enters a frightful desert, where one sees not even a fly, and the way is marked by the carcasses of camels that have perished during the transit. Camels are the only animals capable of sustaining the fatigue of such a journey; and an old man in the caravan (who was a brother of the *Abuna*) assured De Brèvedent that in the caravans that go to the West from the banks of the Nile the camels went forty days without food, because during that time they found no water, and without drinking they could not eat. On emerging from this desert the travellers reached Machou, where they stayed for a while to recover from the fatigue of that long and painful march. At that place the men and women go unclothed, save for a kind of handkerchief to cover their nakedness. The women have no headdress except their own hair braided. The principal men carry a sword hung from the left arm and a spear in the right hand. The houses are merely huts built of mud and covered with the stalks of *dora*, a grain from which they make a bread, very bitter in taste, and also a drink which is very inebriating. This country breeds excellent horses, and is governed by a *Cheik*. Near Machou is the island of Argo, which has its own Governor or *Abab*. Poncet gave some medicines to the *Cheik* and the Governor, and cured several persons. The Nile is bordered by many houses in that

<sup>1</sup> Translated from Le Grand (p. 159). His spellings of names have been left unaltered.

<sup>2</sup> Illic (as often on other pages) Muhammadans are meant.

locality. A day's journey from Machou (or Moscho) lies the village of Harib. The caravan arrived on 13 November at Dongola, the ruler of which calls himself Sultan, King, or *Malek* (corruptly pronounced *Mek*). Nevertheless, he depends absolutely upon the King of Sannaar, who appoints or dismisses him when or how he pleases. The *Cheik* Gandil desired to regale Poncet and De Brèvedent. He therefore accompanied them to Corty, two days' journey from Dongola, kept them there for several days, and gave them provisions for their journey across the desert of Bihouda. They left Dongola [Korti?] on 19 January [1699], and on the 23rd reached Derreira, on the Nile, from which river they had swerved to the westwards in order to avoid some rebels who had taken up arms against the King of Sannaar. On 26 January they quitted Derreira, and two days later they crossed an arm of the Nile. The men were ferried over, while the camels swam across. The same evening they lay at Guelri. From that point they entered a country rather more thickly populated than any they had seen since leaving Upper Egypt. They found there fairly large villages, with roofs shaped like cones or pyramids, on account of the rains. On 6 February they recrossed the river, and slept at Herbagi. There they reposed for two whole days. On the 12th they arrived at Sannaar.

## LETTER FROM PONCET AT JIDDA TO THE FRENCH CONSUL AT CAIRO

5 DECEMBER 1700 (N.S.)<sup>1</sup>

STR,

I am now at the end of the year 1700 and in the third year after my departure. I reached Gondar nine days after the death of Mons. Joseph,<sup>2</sup> worn out by dysentery, in the house of Ahy-Haly [i.e. Hajī Ali], a rascal who plundered me to my very shoes.<sup>3</sup> I was received in the palace of the prince, of which I dare not send you any detailed description.<sup>4</sup>

An ambassador set out with me, bringing ten Abyssinians (girls and boys); also horses and elephants, but I believe the elephants are dead. He is an Armenian from Aleppo, nephew of an old man, named Murat, whom Father Vert saw at Massawa. The old man was then returning from one of the embassies to Batavia<sup>5</sup> on which he has been employed since he entered the service of the grandfather<sup>6</sup> of the present prince sixty years ago.

You have heard about the Abyssinian who was killed at Sennar while I was there [see p. 104]. He was beaten to death with clubs ten or twelve days after my arrival. This occurred during the night, in the house of the King of Sennar, in which I was staying. War was declared two months later, and the ways are closed under penalty of death.

You write that Father Grenier and Father Paulet<sup>7</sup> are going

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the version printed by Le Grand (p. 364). As will be seen, he does not give the whole letter. He states (p. 162) that by the same conveyance Poncet wrote to Father Verseau, this, however, is not available.

<sup>2</sup> Le Grand interpolates that this was the name assumed by Father De Bievcent.

<sup>3</sup> Le Grand says (p. 162) that the Negus, having been informed of this, imprisoned Hajī Ali, sold his house, and gave the proceeds (six pounds weight of gold) to Poncet as compensation. De Maillet (*ibid.*, p. 362) characterizes Hajī Ali as a crafty, avaricious rascal.

<sup>4</sup> Here follows: 'puisque je crains de lever la réputation de mon prochain, qui est si grande qu'elle est petite, vous concevés.' I can only guess at the meaning of this, but it is of no consequence, and is merely recorded for the sake of completeness.

<sup>5</sup> See Le Grand, pp. 162, 182.

<sup>6</sup> Fasilidas, who was Negus from 1632 to 1667.

<sup>7</sup> These two Jesuits had started for Abyssinia by the land route. They managed to reach Gondar by July 1701, and were well received by Iyasu, but popular clamour soon forced him to send them away. One died on the road, and

to Sennar Sir, whither are they bound? The country from which I have just come bears so violent a hatred of the name Frank that no one will eat a grape that is white in colour I leave you to imagine what that implies

*And lower down is written*

I have no time to expatiate, the bearer is about to set out, and (as you write) a full account would need, not a letter, but volumes

There is a Greek (apparently an enemy of our nation), who was once rais of a saïque<sup>1</sup> but has for the past seven or eight years been in attendance on the Negus He was sent to Surat, in order to obtain a passage to England, but he stayed in the English factory at Bombay without going any further, and wasted all the presents he brought from the prince and got very little in return He was clever enough to trick a well known Armenian merchant, named Agappri,<sup>2</sup> into sending him back to Abyssinia in an English ship, together with an agent of the said merchant I encountered the pair at Massawa, where I remained two months, and during that time the Greek set out for the interior without the agent, having first borrowed from him seven hundred crowns The agent was still at Massawa when I came away He had been there eight months awaiting permission from the Negus to enter the country The reason was that, on learning of the arrival of an English ship at Massawa, the monks made a terrible disturbance before the palace of the Negus, but this was allayed, as many others had been, by the adroit behaviour of that monarch Fortunately for me, I was then already on my way down to Massawa Four months before my arrival at Gondar, nearly a hundred thousand monks rose in rebellion, but were soon pacified in the same way by that brave prince

Sir, keep as secret as possible the news of the embassy I have mentioned There are very important reasons for this, which I cannot commit to writing

the other after reaching Sennar (Budge, vol 11, p 424) For some details see Krump's narrative, also Heawood (p 152)

<sup>1</sup> Skipper (Arabic *ra'is*) of a *caïque* (Turkish *kark*) The latter word here means a Levantine ship Thevenot uses *saïque* for *caïque*, and so does Brown (p 170)

<sup>2</sup> On p 155 the name is given as Agapyri De Maillet calls him Agrappi (Le Grand, p 365)

## THE INTERROGATION OF PONCET AT CAIRO

23 JUNE 1701 (N.S.)<sup>1</sup>

SINCE Mons. Poncet, whom we [i.e. the Consul] heretofore sent to the King of Ethiopia as a physician, having arrived in this city on the 20th of the present month, has made to us certain statements regarding his travels and Mons. Murat, who calls himself an ambassador from the King of Ethiopia to His Majesty, which statements we are desirous of investigating, we have this day, the 23rd of June 1701, at five o'clock in the afternoon, caused the said Mons. Charles Poncet to appear before the persons named above, assembled in the hall of the consulate. And being arrived, he confirmed in our presence that which follows:

1. That he was kept in seclusion all the time that he was in Ethiopia, and had many times been in danger of losing his life; insomuch that once, seeing the risk the King ran in protecting him, a Frank, he had declared to him that he would rather kill himself than allow His Majesty to suffer on his behalf.
2. That the King was obliged to visit him in secret, using for this purpose a private passage.
3. Asked whether it would be possible to introduce some missionaries into that country, he replied that he himself, though a mere layman, had had a difficulty in preserving his life, and for others it would be almost impossible. He added that two Fathers of the Propaganda, having since his departure had the temerity to penetrate into that country and having been detected, had been forced to hide themselves in the house of the uncle of Mons. Murat, and that they would be very fortunate if they succeeded in making their escape from the country without being stoned to death.
4. Asked whether, if Mons. Murat were received in France and well treated, it would be possible to induce the King of Ethiopia to receive a French envoy, he answered that such

<sup>1</sup> A translation of the official record, as given by Le Grand (p. 374). The examination lasted about two hours, and those present were the Consul (De Maillet), two representatives of the French community, two other French residents, and the Chancellor of the Consulate (C. J. De Monhenaut).

reception did not depend on the King but on the monks, who were implacable enemies of all Franks. Asked whether such an envoy would be safe, he replied that he did not think so.

5. He avowed that those whom the King employed as ambassadors would never permit the reception of such an envoy, since it would diminish their own profits.

6. He declared that Mons. Murat, here arrived, had done him a thousand bad turns, and had deceived him on several occasions when acting as interpreter between him and the King: that he was a knavish fellow, never to be relied on, and intent only upon gain; adding that, in the short time he was in the country, he never saw the King without soliciting some favour or other.

7. He said at one time that Mons. Murat was more important than he himself was, at another that this was not so; also that he was not an ambassador and had only a letter from the King, as he had.

8. Asked whether he had any present, he answered; 'How could he have, since the elephants and other animals had perished? However, he still had something to offer to His Majesty.'

9. He repeated that on their way Mons. Murat had begged him to say, here and in France, that the King of Ethiopia had only one legitimate wife, whereas the truth is that he has several.

10. Asked why the King of Ethiopia had not preferred to send one of his own subjects as ambassador, since such a one would have been more acceptable than a foreigner who had scarcely resided a year in Ethiopia, he told us that this employment had been promised to the aforesaid Mons. Murat. He added that afterwards the King wished to join with him a monk, but that Murat had objected, fearing that he would be under the monk's control and would have to share with him any gains resulting from the mission. He also stated that the bigger of the two attendants Mons. Murat had with him was an Ethiopian and the smaller a slave.

11. He declared that he could not have got into Ethiopia without the letter that we had given him for the King, and that it in like manner procured him leave to return.



To several of our questions the said Poncet refused to make any answer.

All the facts here recited having been well understood by us and the gentlemen abovementioned, we have caused this record to be drawn up immediately after the departure of the said Mons. Poncet, who went away in anger, murmuring against us, because we instructed him to give the said Mons. Murat to understand that it was necessary for him to be entirely frank with us, as otherwise we did not believe he would be received in France.

## APPENDIX

### OVINGTON'S NOTES ON THE RED SEA PORTS<sup>1</sup>

STEERING up the Arabian coast before the arrival at Mocha, is a seeming wood, which is several date-trees and gardens, to the northward of which is Mocha, which yields a more beautiful prospect at sea than on shore. Here you must not come into less than 7 fathom; nearer are so many dangerous overfalls that they will be apt to scare a young unexpert pilot. When the southermost mosque is once brought to bear east by south, the ships may luff up or bear into the road, and anchor in 4, 5, 6, or 7 fathom. Before this road lies a long ridge of sands, which has seldom above two fathom [of] water; which renders it dangerous for those that enter to go in 'till they have the bearings abovesaid. Near the southern fort is a channel for the grabbs [see p 177] that use these parts, that gives them a passage in or out, but is dangerous for Europeans without the assistance of pilots.

Mocha<sup>2</sup> lies in 13 degrees 30 m. north,<sup>3</sup> and has been of late the principal port in the Red Sea, and to which ships traffick from Surat, Cambay, Diou, Malabar, and other parts of India. Hither also come the ships from several parts of Europe—England, Holland, France, Denmark, Portugal—as also from Casseen,<sup>4</sup> Socatra,<sup>5</sup> Muscatt, and all the Gulph of Persia, which bring hither the products of their several countries, and are met by the merchants of Barbary, Egypt, Turkey, [and?] by the Abasseens, Arabians, &c, who buy off their goods for ready money, and make little other returns but coffee,

<sup>1</sup> The Rev John Ovington acted as chaplain at the East India Company's factory at Surat from 1690 to 1693, and on his return to England published (1696) an account of his experiences under the title of *A Voyage to Suratt*. A handy reprint of this work, edited by Mr H. G. Rawlinson, C.I.E., was issued by the Oxford University Press in 1929. Alexander Hamilton, in his *New Account of the East Indies* (1727), sneered at Ovington as relying upon 'common report' for much of his information, and it is true that he knew nothing at first hand of the Red Sea. He was, however, in Mr Rawlinson's words, 'a keen and diligent observer', and at Surat he was in contact with seamen and merchants, both English and Indian, engaged in trade with Mocha and other Arab ports. It has been thought worth while to reproduce his description of those places, as being both compendious and interesting, though, as being second-hand information, it has been placed in an appendix.

<sup>2</sup> This account of Mocha and its trade may be compared with that given by Hamilton (vol. 1, ch. v), to which port he paid three visits between 1712 and 1716. It has long since lost its trade.

<sup>3</sup> Here and elsewhere the latitude given is only approximate.

<sup>4</sup> Kishn (or Qishn), on the southern coast of Arabia, near Rās Fartāk.

<sup>5</sup> The island of Sokotra, about 490 miles east of Aden.

sena, and some aloes hepetica and other small things of no great moment.

The custom paid for their goods by the Europeans is 3 per cent, both out and in; and they are privileged to lay their goods in their houses which they vent here, without being constrain'd to bring them to the customhouse. The goods of all other merchants are examined and the customs stated; which are 5 per cent, that is, 2 per cent. more than what is requir'd from the Europeans. This was formerly done in favour to those merchants, but is of late turn'd much to their prejudice.

If the Europeans bring hither any cloath or piece goods, they are some of them open'd to discover what kind they are of and that a just account of them may be carried to the Governour. But the custom for them is paid according only to what they are sold and bought at, which is accepted by the Governour; but then, if the broker falsifies in his accounts and is ever found guilty of fraudulent returns, he smarts severely and is fleec'd for it after the ships' departure.

Whatever commodities are bought or sold by weight must be brought to the scales at the custom-house, by which both parties must be determin'd.

The weights here are those that follow, viz.

Bahars are English 3 c[wt ], 3 q[rs ], or 420 l[b ]

Frassells are 15 to one baharr [or] 28 [lb.].

Manns, 10 to one frassel.

Fuckeas, 40 to one mann.

Coffila's, 10 to one fuckea.<sup>1</sup>

Dry measures are these, viz.

Teman is 40 memeeda's.<sup>2</sup>

Medeeda [? *madīda*] is 3 pints English.

By this medeeda they sell oil, butter, and liquids; but it yields not above two pints and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of corn, &c. in dry measures. They measure their cloath, silk, &c. by a covit or guz,<sup>3</sup> which is 24 inches, and buy our cloath by the piece, of which they measure 4 or 5 together, and take our accounts and packers' marks.

Their coins are dollars of all sorts; but they abate 5 per cent. on

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton agrees as to these weights, except that he gives 29½ lb as the English equivalent of the *fārsala*. Of the other weights, 'mann' is the familiar maund, 'fuckea' is *vāggyat*, 'coffila' is *qashah*.

<sup>2</sup> 'Teman' is *tūmān* (Hamilton's 'tomaan'). 'Memeeda' is an error for 'medceda'

<sup>3</sup> Port *covado* and Persian *gaj*.

the pillar dollars,<sup>1</sup> because they esteem their silver not very pure. The dollar weight with them is 17 dr 14 gr, as it is only 17 dr and 12 gr with us. All their coins are taken by weight, and valued according to their fineness. And of gold they have several sorts, viz. the ducket of Venice, Germany, Barbary, Turkey, Egypt, &c. The comassees are a small coin, valued according to the government's pleasure; but they keep their accounts by an imaginary coin of cabees [*kabir*], reckoning 80 to a dollar.<sup>2</sup>

The natives were very civil and courteous, to the English especially, 'till the year 1687, when the war commenc'd between the English and the Mogul,<sup>3</sup> which was so severe among the poor Moor merchants and such a disturbance and loss to the innocent Indians that traded hither that it has quite (in a manner) destroy'd the traffick of this port and driven the trade to several other parts<sup>4</sup> in this sea. This war has since occasion'd the utter ruin of several Indian, Turkey, and Arabian merchants. For when the English sailers at that time perceiv'd the softness of the Indian lascars, how tame they were to all their cruelties, how patient and submissive to their force and arms, and how willingly they endured the spoiling of their goods rather than ingage their lives in a bloody contest, they no sooner return'd for England but they embark'd again upon a new design, with some more Europeans, to turn pirates and rob these harmless traffickers in the Red Sea, and accordingly, in the year 1691, they took from the merchants that traded between Mocha and Suratt to the value of 120,000*l*. The succeeding year they did the same; and at this time there are two or three small ships more upon the quest for rich prizes and making seizure of those ships they meet with; which has so impoverish'd already some of the Mogul's people that they must either cease to carry on a trade or resolve to be made

<sup>1</sup> Spanish rials of eight, bearing the figure of the Pillars of Hercules.

<sup>2</sup> Hamilton says 'The coin current is the *cammasse*, which 's heightned and lowered at the *sheriffs* [*shroffs*] or bankers discretion, from 50 to 80 for a current dollar, which is but an imaginary species, being always reckoned 21½ per cent lower then Spanish dollars.' Francis Rogers, in dealing with the coins current at Aden in 1701-2 values the 'comacey' at 1*d* or ¾*d*, and Bruce (vol II, p. 218) in 1769 describes it as a coin of base silver, ninety of which are worth a Venetian sequin.

<sup>3</sup> The desultory hostilities here mentioned began in 1686 and continued until 1690. During most of this time only the factories on the eastern side of India were affected, though in 1689 the factory at Surat was seized likewise. The English on their part captured and confiscated Indian ships wherever they found them, and the trade with the Red Sea was seriously affected. For the full story see Hunter's *History of British India* (vol II, ch. vii) and the authorities he cites.

<sup>4</sup> Possibly a misprint for 'ports'.

a prey.<sup>1</sup> Tho' the Mogul cannot justly charge the East India Company with the barbarous actions of these pirates, yet the unhappy occasion of it may be very apt to excite in him very irreful resentments, because of the misery of so many of his subjects; and the English at Suratt have been already made sensible of some inconveniences and hardships consequent upon it, by their imprisonment in their factory twice in two years while I stay'd there.

Coffee is the only commodity in repute in this port; of which there is no scarcity at all. It grows in abundance at Beetlefuckee [see p. 73], Sonany,<sup>2</sup> Asab,<sup>3</sup> and other parts; but from these it seldom comes garbled [i.e. sifted] or well packt, which puts the buyers upon a new trouble. It may be bought (one year with another) at about 45 dollars per baharr, and shipt. It is ripe at a proper season of the year, and is subject to blasts [i.e. blights], as our corn and fruits are. It thrives near the water, and grows in clusters like our holly berries. The berry itself resembles a bay berry; two of which are inclos'd in one shell, which separates when it is broken. The leaf of it is like a lawrel's in bigness, but very thin. The tree itself neither shoots out in largeness nor is very long productive of fruit, but is still [i.e. constantly] supplied by new planting of others. This commodity is proper only to these parts and (as the Arabs tell us) is by the bounty of Heaven given only to them, as a means to procure for them all those necessities which they stand in need of from other parts. Few commodities of any value are here besides, except sena, some quantity of which may be bought, and very cheap; as also aloes hepatica. From Casseen, Seer,<sup>4</sup> and Socatra come aloes socatra and olibanum; from Gella,<sup>5</sup> and other parts on the Abasseen shore, mirrh; from Socachim [Suakin], elephants' teeth and gold dust, which are bought by the merchants of India.

Moseck<sup>6</sup> is distant northwest from Mocha about 10 leagues, and is of no importance for trade, except it be for salt, since Mocha drew the Indian merchants from it and drein'd its commerce; for the city of Mocha cannot boast of its foundation above two hundred years. This port is situated near Zebid [see p. 73] and Beetlefuckee;

<sup>1</sup> For these piracies see a note on p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Sa'na ?

<sup>3</sup> On the Abyssinian coast, almost opposite to Mocha.

<sup>4</sup> Probably Ash-Shihr, on the southern coast of Arabia, about 40 miles north-east of Mukalla, is intended. It was once the chief port between Aden and Muskat.

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps Zeila is intended.

<sup>6</sup> Maushij or Moshij, 24 miles northward of Mocha, still supplies that place with water, as it did in Hamilton's day.

but Hodeeda is supply'd with coffee from several places of note for that commodity.

Jutoi<sup>1</sup> was formerly a burning island, and is at present uninhabited, and is distant from Mooseek about 3 leagues.

Hodeeda is plac'd in about 14 d 50 m, and is distant from Mocha about 60 miles. In this is a creek, very convenient for building grabbs or gelva's,<sup>2</sup> and it is likewise very happy in a port, in which is shipp'd abundance of coffee for Judda, Mocha, and other places. It is under the government of Lohia, the next port of moment upon the main

Comoian [Kamarān] is an island which is blest by nature with a favourable soil and advantageous situation, but unfortunate in the entertainment of villanous inhabitants, who are characteriz'd with no better names than that of robbers or bandittoes. It lies in 15 deg 20 m, and is about 10 miles long and two broad.<sup>3</sup> Ships of the greatest burthen may anchor safely in a bay or road which lies on the easternmost side of it, not subject to any danger by violent frets of wind or tempestuous blustering weather. It is fortified with a castle, in which are some few guns and men, and it produces no commodities of considerable advantage, but supplies the ships with good water, goats, and fish. The passage from hence to the main is not above an English mile.

Since the port of Mocha was disturb'd by the English ships in the Indian war and the merchants' goods which were bound for Suratt were there seiz'd on by Captain A —s,<sup>4</sup> this struck such terror in all those people that were formerly wont to trade thither that they declin'd the port and remov'd the trade to a town not very remote from it, nam'd Lohia,<sup>5</sup> which is situated in 15 degr 4 m, and is now grown into that credit which Mocha had, and draws to it both the adjacent merchants and the ships from India and other parts. The entrance into the harbour here is difficult, and dangerous without pilots; but the port is noted for its convenience and trade in small vessels and ships for Judda. It is honour'd too with the residence

<sup>1</sup> There is no island in the position indicated. Probably Ovington was misinformed, and 'Jutor' is a confused reference to Jabal Attur, a volcanic island mentioned by Bruce, who describes it as a well-known sea mark for voyagers, situated in 15° 38' N latitude.

<sup>2</sup> 'Grab' was applied to more than one type of vessel, 'gelva' is a form of 'gallevat'. But Ovington is probably using both terms in the general sense of country-built craft.

<sup>3</sup> More accurately, about 12 miles long and for the most part about 4 miles broad.

<sup>4</sup> Probably the last letter is a misprint and 'Avery' (see p. 69) is intended.

<sup>5</sup> Luhaiya or Lohiya, about 70 miles north of Hodeida.

of the governour of all this part of the country and the island before mention'd

Gczon [Gīzan], which lies in 17 deg north, is the last town of note upon this coast, appertaining to the King of Arabia Felix [Yemen] 'Tis eminent for the trade of pearl-fishing, which is manag'd by bannians with that advantage that they raise themselves thereby to very great estates The island Fersham,<sup>1</sup> which is situated from hence about three leagues, is most remarkable for this fishing, wherein the natives are employ'd by the bannians The town itself is small, and only considerable for this pearl-fishing, and for sending a great quantity of corn to all parts of Arabia Felix From hence to Comphida is no port of moment or that is any way remarkable for traffick, and if there were some convenient harbours in this distance the wild Arabs, who are expert robbers and live by spoil and in habit those parts, would certainly divert all merchants from coming near them

The next place, as we ascend towards the head of the Red Sea, is Comphida,<sup>2</sup> which lies in 19 deg 5 m It was formerly subject to the Turks, and its present Governour commands only about 50 souldiers, which carries only a face of command to keep the people in awe, but is more probably design'd for prevention of the stealing of custom, because many persons chuse to land here and from hence travel by land to Mecca

Judda is the principal port in this sea belonging to the Grand Signior, lying in about 21 deg 30 m This port is environ'd with dangerous sands, which make the passage into it difficult to strangers, but is very safe for ships when they come to an anchor The air is healthful and its provisions sound and plentiful, for it affords choice mutton, beef, fish, grapes and other fruits It is the sea-port to Mecca, a place renown'd for the nativity of Mahomet, the vile impostor, who first drew breath in this barren soil And indeed the land about that place is so useless and unprofitable and unfit for any improvements, that it seems to be accurs'd by nature and debarr'd of Heaven's blessings, by a constant scarcity of all things, unless they are imported from other kingdoms Therefore is the Grand Signior oblig'd to very great expences for its support, to furnish out a maintenance for it yearly from Egypt and send from thence 20 or 25 sail of large ships, laden with provisions, money, &c, for its subsistence and the support of trade.

<sup>1</sup> Farasān, really two islands, connected by a sandy spit

<sup>2</sup> (Al-) Qunfidha, 320 miles south-east of Jidda See Poncet's description on p 157

Judda flourishes in a constant traffick from India, Persia, other parts of Arabia, and the Abassee shore. It is subject to the Turkish government and defended by their arms and valour<sup>f</sup>, for its fortifications otherwise are but very weak, being only surrounded by mud walls. There is a passage into this town three ways, by so many gates, two of which are not considerable, but the third (which is the principal and leads towards the celebrated birthplace of the Prophet) is so sacred that no Christian must pass thro' it without forfeiture of his religion and converting to the profession of the Mahometan law, except he be a man of wealth, and then his soul is not so valuable as his money, which will freely be taken in exchange for it, and makes all offences venial here

Hither the Arabians bring their coffee, which is bought here by the Turks and shipp'd for the Sues. The dollar weight here is 17 d. 10 gr. Hither likewise resort every year several hoggees [*hajis*] from all parts of the Mahometan countries, who come hither as pilgrims in a spirit of devotion, to visit their fam'd city Mecca. And as soon as they are arriv'd here or at Yamboe, which is a port a little higher in this sea, they instantly strip themselves, out of a humour of mortification, and set out in a holy pilgrimage for Mecca, with only a longee [*Hind lungi*] about their middle, which is a piece of callicoe about three yards length. But I leave off from any description of these customs, being engag'd only to proceed in an account of their ports. From hence therefore the ships sail in November and December for the Sues, to which the passage is render'd very tedious by their coming to an anchor every night. For rocks and sands, which are very numerous between these two places, must needs be very dangerous to pilots that trust only to their outward senses and are guided by the eye without any use of either lead or line or compass. They place themselves upon the ship's fore-castle to espy the colour and rippings of the water and to direct them clear of all the shoals. The anchoring places all along this coast are very good, but the towns are few, because the country is much disturb'd by the wild Arabs, whose life is a pilgrimage of rapine and spoil. Therefore, if the wind shifts at noon, or if they cannot reach their port before the night comes on, they certainly bear away to the port from whence they came, if there is no harbour nearer.

From Judda to Yamboe, which is the next port of any note, is reckoned above 10<sup>1</sup> leagues, for it is situate in 25 deg. 10 m. The harbour is safe for ships when they have once escap'd the passage into it, which is dangerous by reason of the many shoals and sands.

<sup>1</sup> Really about 210 miles. Probably Ovington's figure was misprinted.



The castle with which the town is fortified is rather built for a terror to the petty insolencies of the Arabs than as a fort of defence against a powerful, warlike enemy. This town, which is reputed very ancient, has lost abundance of its former glory, in that it once was dignified with the title of chief port for the city Mecca, but is now confin'd a seaport only to Medina, the burying-place of their victorious and triumphant Prophet, from which it is distant about four days' journey. The adjacent country produces little but grapes for the use of the natives and of the ships, therefore stores and provisions for Medina are here unloaded that are brought for that end in ships from Sues.

From hence is nothing remarkable, besides the barrenness and strangeness of the country, 'till we come to the narrowing of the sea which is next Mount Sinai, the cape of which is called *Ras Mahomed* [*Ras Muhammad*], or 'the head of Mahomet', from which to Tor (which is the port of Mount Sinai) is about seven leagues, and about the same distance from the Egyptian shore.

Tor is the seaport of Mount Sinai, distant from it about 40 miles, wherein is a castle of small force, under the government of the Turks.

At Sinai live the caloyers,<sup>1</sup> or a convent of religious Greeks, who give a friendly reception to all sort of pilgrims that resort thither. This monastery is said to have been built by Justinian, and dedicated to St. Catherine. The Greeks distribute their charity promiscuously, as well to the Arabians as those of their own nation, both to the Christians and the Mahometans. The Greeks here enjoy too a large plantation of date trees, the fruit whereof is generally consum'd by the Arabs, who behave themselves imperiously towards these Christians and mightily enslave them, meerly for allowing them the liberty of enjoying their monastery at the Mount.

Near Tor is a bath called *Hummum Mosa*,<sup>2</sup> or 'the Bath of Moses', the water whereof is warm as new milk, and at their return from Mecca the caravans in their passage stop here.

From Tor to the head of the Red Sea, which may be about 100 miles, nothing is to be seen very considerable but that place which is so remarkable in the history of the Holy Scriptures, and which these natives, as well as the Turks and Greeks, say was the very place where the Children of Israel passed the Red Sea in their flight from Pharaoh, which is about 40 or 50 miles distant from the head of it. The passage is not above 15 miles broad, and the mid channel

<sup>1</sup> Greek monks (*καλογηροι*). See Von Harff, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly near the 'Jebel Hammām Syednī Mūsā' of the *Pilot*, situated 3 miles north of Tor.

is about 35 fathoms deep. Josephus, giving an account of this wonderful escape of the Israelites, tells us (l. 2, c. 7) how that Alexander's army had such another passage through the Sea of Pamphilia, which divided itself to give way to his souldiers, in his expedition against the Persians, because there was no other way to come to destroy them.

The Egyptian shoar, all along that coast which is opposite to this, is observ'd to be very steep, except it be a part of it thro' which the Children of Israel journey'd, which is a very fine descent about eight or nine miles down to the sea, on each side of which are impassible mountains, like so many high walls, which are called *Gibbal Pharoon*,<sup>1</sup> or 'the Hills of Pharaoh' So that, except the sea had open'd for the safety of God's people, they had nowhere to turn, either to the right hand or to the left, but must have inevitably perisht by the hands of Pharaoh's army.

Sues is an ancient town at the very head of the Red Sea, and lies nearest the latitude of 30 d. It is defend'd by a wall and a castle of some force, design'd rather as a small bulwark against the incursions of the wild Arabs than to guard it from the arm of a potent assailant. It is the seaport of Egypt, and under the government of Grand Cairo, from which it is distant about 50 or 60 miles. The best ships belonging to the port are bought at Suratt by the Turks, who carry on the sole trade of this place, tho' some vessels of very good burthen are built here too, tho' by very unskilful artists. Pliny, in his *Nat. Hist.* (l. vi, cap. 29) mentions a town called Suasa, so called (as some think) from Shuak, one of Abraham's sons by Keturah (*Gen.* 25, 2), and says it lies in that part of Arabia which is next to Egypt. This probably must be the same.

I have now finish'd these travels upon the Arabian shore all along the Red Sea as far as from Babell-Mandell, which is the opening into the Indian Ocean, to Sues, which is at the head of that gulph, lying nearest north-west and south-east, and distant above 1200 miles; and have principally describ'd only the ports on the Arabian coast (without insisting much upon other matters) to give some light to sailers and such as travel into some of those unfrequented parts, where they may find convenient ports, and what is the condition of their harbours, and something of their trade.

<sup>1</sup> *Gibāl* (Egyptian) *Fir'aun* (Arabic).

## LUDOLF'S MAP OF ABYSSINIA (1683)

HIOB LUDOLF or Lcutholf (1624-1704) was a pioneer in Ethiopian linguistic studies, he mastered the Amharic and Guz languages and compiled the earliest dictionaries and grammars of these tongues. An accomplished geographer, he was also indefatigable in diffusing the knowledge of Abyssinia derived from the Portuguese Jesuits, whose reports made that region the best-mapped part of interior Africa at the end of the seventeenth century. Manuscript maps of Abyssinia, made by Ludolf for the Elector of Mainz (who sent his copy to M. Thevenot before 1673), the King of Denmark, the Elector Palatine and others, were in circulation some years before his map was first published in the second edition (1684) of *A New History of Ethiopia*, the English translation of Ludolf's *Historia Aethiopica*. The map, which bears the date 1683, was drawn by his son Christian 'ex autographo parentis' and probably engraved at Frankfurt. It seems to have been intended, but to have been completed too late, for issue with the Latin edition (1681) of his history, which contains a chapter (lib. I, cap. 4) describing it.<sup>1</sup> The map is found in some copies of the Latin edition, but evidently as a later insertion.

About this time Ludolf was attempting to promote a coalition between Abyssinia and England, France, and Holland against the Turks, then besieging Vienna. To this end, as his biographer tells us, he printed in 1683 letters in Amharic which he sent by several ships to Abyssinia, 'addita simul tabula Habessin regni geographica, noua prorsus & emendatissima'.<sup>2</sup> This, no doubt, refers to impressions taken from the engraved plate in Frankfurt, where the map was perhaps at the same time inserted in all unsold copies of the *Historia*. In 1683-4 Ludolf visited France, Holland, and England to further his political plans, and he apparently carried with him the plate, from which the map was printed<sup>3</sup> for the English edition of 1684.

A smaller version of the map, engraved by H. Liebau, appeared in the French translation (1684) of the *Historia*, and this was engraved as late as 1728 (perhaps in the atelier of d'Anville) for Le

<sup>1</sup> See also C. Juncker, *Commentarius de ista Iobi Ludolfi* (1720), p. 162: 'Huic libro addidit nouam tabulam chorographicam huius regni'.

<sup>2</sup> Juncker, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> On paper bearing the watermark of Pieter van der Ley, a Dutch paper maker who worked largely for the English market (see E. Heavood in *The Library*, ser. 4, vol. 11, p. 497, fig. 170). The same paper was used for (inter alia) Pitt's *English Atlas*, 1683-5.

Grand's edition of Father Lobo's narrative. In modern times Ludolf's map has been reproduced by photolithography in C. Nerazzini's *La Conquista mussulmana dell' Etiopia nel secolo XVI* (1891).

In his history (lib. 1, cap. 4) Ludolf comments scornfully on the 'vulgar tables', that is, the maps of Sanson and the Dutch cartographers, who continued to present a degenerate version<sup>1</sup> of Ptolemy's outline, placing the Nile sources in about 10° south latitude and extending the Ethiopian kingdom deep into the centre of Africa. He himself follows in outline (though with superior skill in execution) the map published by Father Baltasar Telles (or Tellez) in his *Historia geral de Etiopia a Alta* (Coimbra, 1660), a compilation from the accounts of the Jesuits P. Paez and M. d'Almeida. Telles's map was engraved from Almeida's manuscript map,<sup>2</sup> the first to be drawn by an European from surveys made in the country. From Telles Ludolf took his general outline and positions,<sup>3</sup> adding detail (especially in 'the Midland Regions'), from information supplied by *Abba* Gregory, an Abyssinian monk whom he met in Rome and invited to Germany. The latitudes assigned are on the whole commendably accurate; the longitudes are much exaggerated, as was common before French geodesists introduced improved methods of observation and a truer estimate of the earth's size. The difference (8°) by which Ludolf's figures of longitude regularly exceed those of Telles may be explained by the assumption that the former took as his prime meridian that of the Azores, the latter that of Ferro.

Ludolf's map is original in its correction of the distorted forms of place-names adopted by the Portuguese, of these he gives in his text some ludicrous instances, e.g. 'Cassumo' for Aksum, Barnagasso<sup>4</sup> for *Bah-nigus*. In making more accurate transliterations Ludolf was assisted by Gregory. The problem of transliteration led

<sup>1</sup> Derived from Gastaldi and Mercator.

<sup>2</sup> The only surviving copy of Almeida's map, dated 1662 and apparently in his holograph, is in the British Museum (Add MS 9861). It seems to have been collected in Goa, with other Jesuit manuscripts, by Marsden and presented by him to the Museum. The map shows latitudes but no longitudes. It is reproduced by C. Beccari, *Rerum Æthiopicarum scriptores*, tom 1, 1903.

<sup>3</sup> He says that he 'first [i.e. in his manuscript maps] follow'd the longitude and latitude of the vulgar Tables' but 'at length having happen'd upon the Chorographick Table of *Tellezius*, delineated by the Fathers of the Society, with the help of the *Astirolabe*, I made no scruple to retain the *Degrees*, as by them set down'.

<sup>4</sup> Or 'Barnagaes' (Telles), i.e. Tigre. Not in fact the name of the province, but the title of its governor. (See *supra*, p. 146.)

him, in the *Historia* and elsewhere, to advocate the use of universal phonetic characters

Ludolf's map and that of Telles were sometimes confused with the less accurate one compiled by the Roman Jesuit F. Eschinardi 'sur le rapport fidele des Peies de la Societe' for H. Justel's *Recueil de divers voyages faits en Afrique et en l'Amerique* (1674). Thus John Stevens attached to his translation (1710) of Telles's compilation (in *A New Collection of Voyages and Travels*) the map of Eschinardi, ascribing it to Telles. The discrepancies between the two maps were pointed out by M. Thevenot,<sup>1</sup> whose own map is a copy of that of Telles.

Although Ludolf's representation of Abyssinia was followed by Thevenot in 1673 and by others<sup>2</sup> from about 1690, it was not at once or generally adopted by cartographers. Some preferred the outline of Eschinardi, which appeared from 1700 in the African maps of G. Delisle. Others, with obstinate inertia, continued to reproduce as late as 1730 the debased outline inherited from the Dutch maps of the seventeenth century, in this group are found the large map publishing establishments (Sanson-Jaillot, Mortier, Schenck, and Homann) whose conservatism was in part dictated by their valuable stocks of old plates.<sup>3</sup> It was d'Anville, most critical of cartographers, who established the superiority of Ludolf's map by using it as the principal source for his numerous representations of North-east Africa, from his *Carte de l'Éthiopie orientale* and small map of Africa (both of 1727)<sup>4</sup> to his great map of the continent (1749) and its final revision in 1772, and he acknowledged the debt in his *Dissertation sur les sources du Nil* (1759). Although d'Anville depicts the river system of the Blue Nile in more detail and the form which he gives to Lake Tana is closer to that of Eschinardi, yet his outline is substantially that of Ludolf, with whom he also agrees in

<sup>1</sup> *Remarques sur les relations d'Éthiopie des RR. PP. Ieronimo Lobo, &c. de Balthazar Tellez* (1673), p. 1, in his *Relations de divers voyages curieux* pt. 3.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. de Fer (1694) II. Moll (1705 and 1710). A curious feature of these maps is the distinction drawn between 'Abyssinia', i.e. the kingdom proper and 'Ethiopia', a vast inland area ('wholly unknown to the Europeans') extending west to the Atlantic and south almost to the Zambezi.

<sup>3</sup> The legend of one such map, the *Totius Africae nova representatio* of J. B. Homann (c. 1720), although it claims to use the reports of the Jesuits, actually warns its readers not to be misled by Ludolf's map: 'Ludolphum hactenus in caute secuti sunt, qui novo quodam sistemate originem Nili recentioribus Tabulis suis perperam inseruerunt'. Yet the form of Abyssinia in Homann's map differs little from that in vogue 100 years earlier!

<sup>4</sup> The former published in Le Grand's edition of Lobo (1728) the latter in Labat's *Nouvelle relation de l'Afrique occidentale* (1728).





placing Abyssinia between  $8^{\circ}$  and  $17^{\circ}$  north latitude and in giving the country a longitudinal extension of  $10^{\circ}$ .

In spite of Bruce's denigration of the Jesuits, his map of the Nile sources, derived from his own journeys, generally failed to improve upon their outline, particularly in depicting the upper loop of the Blue Nile (or Abai), his version of which is indeed less accurate than that of Telles and Ludolf,<sup>1</sup> as d'Anville demonstrated to Bruce in Paris on the latter's return.

R. A. SKELTON

<sup>1</sup> See also C. T. Beke, *The Sources of the Nile*, 1860.



# INDEX

- Abba*, 140, 153  
 Abbeville, 58  
*Abdast*, 23, and *passim*  
 Abecq, 108  
 Abiad, 112  
 Aborkna, 111  
 Abria, 108  
 Abraham, 36, 37, 181, the reputed  
 builder of the Ka'ba, 10, 22, 25, 33,  
 78, his 'tomb', 32  
 Abu Ghaffar, 156  
*Abuma* Marcos, the, 112, 122, his ap-  
 pointment and powers, 122, offi-  
 ciates, 118, Poncet visits, 122, his  
 house, 122, his brother, 96, 113,  
 166  
*Abuma* Synnada, the, 123, 124  
 Acacia, 102  
 Aduwa, province of, 145, its governor,  
 145, town of, 145  
*Adice*, the, xvi, xv  
 Aga, 161  
 Agaviri, 155, 169  
 Agaus, the, 125, 134  
 Aksum 148, 149  
 Albuquerque, Alfonso de, 76  
 Aleppo 168  
 Alexandretta *See* Scanderoon  
 Alexandria, Pitts at, 6, 7, 49 Daniel  
 at, 60, 83, French at, 61, Patriarch  
 of, 122, plague in, 49, mosque at,  
 6, Pompey's Pillar, 7, underground  
 cisterns, 6  
 Alfaa, 95, 101  
 Alfon, 101  
 Algiers, 5, 16, 17, 25, 39, 44, 49, Dey  
 of, 5 pirates from, 59  
 Almeida, Father d', 183  
 Aloes 113, trade in, 155, 174, 176  
 Ambergris, 64  
*Amouli*, 122  
 Anatolia, 4  
 Anisced, 98  
 Anne, St., 143 (2)  
 Aqaba 48  
 Arafat, 34, 35  
 Arbatq *See* Harbagy  
 Argo (island), 96, 97, 166  
 Aringo, 129, 136, palace at, 129  
 Arkiko, 154 (2)  
 Armies, Abyssinian, 125, 127, 129  
 Arsenic, 107  
 Ash Shihir, 176  
 Assab, 176  
 Asyut, 94 (3)  
*Avania*, 88  
 Avery, John, 69, 177.  
 Avity, Pierre D', 4, 12.  
 Bacras, 108  
 Baha, 108  
*Bahar*, 174  
*Bahr-Nigw*, 146, 147, 149, 151, 183  
 Bait-al-Faqih, 73, 176 (2)  
*Bait-Allah* *See* Ka'ba  
 Balbau, 123  
 Balsams, 11.  
 Bamboos, 111, 112, 144.  
 Banioquebys, 70  
 Banyans, 72, 157, 178.  
 Baobab, 108  
 Barangoa, 113  
 Barbary, 78, 173, ducats, 175  
 Bartcha (Barko), 113-15, 140  
 Basboch, 108  
 Bastinado, 11, 17  
 Batavia, 168  
 Bayuda (desert), 100, 167  
 Beads, 40, 107.  
 Bears, 112  
 Beef, 119, 146, 178  
 Beer, 106  
 Bengébres, 70  
 Berbers, 97, 99  
 Bernat, Father du, xxvii  
 Bernier, François, xliii, xliii, 133n,  
 134n, 137n  
 Bezoar, 131  
*Bylander*, 57  
 Bizen, 152-4  
 Black Sea, 15  
 Boats made of rushes, 135  
*Boghaz*, 60  
 Bombay, 169  
 Boulogne, 57, 58  
*Bousa*, 106, 166  
 Bower, —, 61  
 Box trees, 111, 112  
 Brandy, 106, 119, 120  
 Brass, 107  
 Brevedent, C F X de, xvi, xvi,  
 xxv, 93, 99, 102, 104, 110, illness  
 and death of, 74, 113, 115, 168, his  
 character, 114, 115, 132, his previous  
 career, 115, his predictions, 114, 124,  
 his letter to De Maillet, xlv, 166  
 Bruce, James, *passim*  
 Buffaloes, 11, 17  
 Buge, 66  
 Bulâq, 8, 9, 13, 61, 93, Daniel at, 60  
 Bulbul, 108  
 Burrows, John, xlv, 59

- 'Cafar', 71  
 'Caffargues', 82  
 Caiqui, 169  
 Cairo the name, 3, Pitts on, 9, 12-18,  
   Daniel at, 60-3, 82, Poncet at, 162,  
   people of, 62, their houses, 13,  
   mosques at, 12, 62, languages  
   spoken in, 13, water supply, 12, 14,  
   plague in, 48, 61, 75, 76, 82, 83, 99,  
   115, slave market in, 15, the citadel,  
   18, 61, the Pyramids, 13, 61, other  
   objects of interest, 61, Dutch mer-  
   chants in, 82, French in, 60, 61, 82,  
   170, Venetians in, 82  
 Calicoes, 11, 103, 106, 130, 150, 179  
 Caliphs, the, 32  
 'Caloyers', 180  
 Cambay, 173  
 Camels, *passim*, catch, 42, endurance  
   of, 45, 96, 166, hire of, 42 price of,  
   105  
 Camin, 101  
*Cammasie*, 175  
 Cannon, 97, 118, 136, 159  
 Cantara, 93, 166  
 Caravans to Mecca, 3, 78, 158, to  
   Sennar, 93, 94 to Suez, 63, organiza-  
   tion of, 42, 94, leaders of, 3, 42, 94,  
   99, plundered, 10, 45, 70, 158  
 Cardamoms, 127  
 Cassia, 155  
*Catapulia*, 114  
 Catherine, St, 80, 81, 162, 163, 180  
 Changallas, the, 128  
 Chau, 111  
 Chickens, incubation of, 15  
 Chilga, 95, 113  
 China ware, 38  
*Chourga*, 98  
 Church ceremonies in Abyssinia, 117,  
   123, 129, 138, 149, at Mt Sinai, 162  
 Churches described, 139  
 Circumcision, 139  
 Citron trees, 128, 145  
 Civet, 105, 107, 113, 136, 155, how  
   obtained, 136  
 Civita Vecchia, 59  
 Cloves, 98  
 Coffee, 70, in Egypt, 11, at Sennar,  
   106, not used in Abyssinia, 106,  
   155, originated there, 155, the  
   plant described, 155, 176, its culti-  
   vation, 176, trade in, 64 71, 73,  
   155, 163, 173, 176, 177, 179, price of,  
   176  
 Coga, 142, a former capital, 144  
 Collier, Jeremy, 4, 12  
 Colocynth, 95, 97  
 Cook, Sir Thomas, 11, 53, 60.  
 Coote, Sir Eyre, 1111  
 Copts, 10, 132, 133, dress of, 11  
 Cornelians, 38  
 Cotram, 101  
 Cotton, 112, 113, 130  
*Cogle*, 110  
*Cowman*, 122  
*Covado*, 174  
 Crocodiles, 10, 76, 134  
  
 Dahalottom (island), 156  
 Dahlak (island), 156  
*Dahl*, 22, 23  
 Damascus, 4, 70  
 Damietta, 9, 10, 75  
 Daniel, William his previous history,  
   11, 56, 76, 83, his relations with the  
   East India Company, 11, 111, 55,  
   56, 60, 84, 86, his intercourse with  
   Poncet, 1111, 1111, 74-6, his nar-  
   rative, 111, 111, 51-85, his account  
   of expenses, 88  
 Danish trade with Mocha, 173  
 Date trees, 94, 180  
 Date wine, 68, 162  
 Debarke, 108  
*Deleb* (palm), 109, 111  
 Delcb (town), 111  
 Dember 134  
*Denier*, 105  
 Denier, 100, 167  
 Dervishes, 27 (2), 40  
 Diu, 173  
 Dodar, 108  
 Dollars, 41, 174, 179 *See also* Eight,  
   pieces of  
 Dongola, 95, 167, described, 99,  
   Poncet at, 97-100, King of, 99, 100,  
   167, tribute to Sennar, 100, 167,  
   son of, 97  
 Donkeys, 14  
 Dotterels, 10  
*Double*, 105  
*Down* palm, 109, sails made from  
   leaves of, 110, 156  
 Drei, 80  
 Dromedaries, 71, 72, 164  
 Ducats, 175  
 Ducks, how caught, 10  
*Dura*, bread and beer made from, 98,  
   105, 106, 166, reeds of, 98, 166  
 Dutch in Cairo, 82, trade with Mocha,  
   173, attempt to trade with Abyss-  
   inia, 154  
 Duvarna, 142, 146, 147, 151, 165, de-  
   scribed, 146

- East India Company, Daniel and the, *xxv*, *xxvi*, 55, 56, 60, 84, 86  
 Ebony trees, 117  
*Ecu*, 105  
*Efendi*, 40  
 Egypt described, 6-18, 60-3, ducats, 175, Pasha of, *xxvi*, *xxvi*, 60, 62, 77, *farmān* from, 63, 64 *See also* Alexandria, Cairo, Nile, &c  
 Egypt, Upper, plague in, 99  
 Eight, pieces of, 64, 69, 71, 174, 179, value of, 41, 105  
 Elephants, 140, 145, 146, 168, 171  
 Elias, 81, chapel of, 163  
 Emfras, 136, 137, 142, 143  
 England, intended embassy from Abyssinia to, 169  
 English trade with Mocha, 173, attempts to trade with Abyssinia, 155, 169  
*Erbab*, 97, 100, 166  
*Erdeb*, 111  
 Eschinardi, F, 184  
 Eve, 34, her tomb, 34, 159  
*Ezula*, 95  
  
*Fadda*, 105  
 Falkener, Sir William, *xxi*  
 Farrasān (island), 178  
*Farmān*, 63, 64  
*Fārsala*, 174  
 Fasilidas, the Negus, 123, 168  
 Fasilidas, Prince, death of, 147, 155, 163, mourning for, 149-51, his character, 147, 148  
 Felucca, 58  
 Fennel, 98  
 Fez, 3  
 Flav, 10  
 Fleetwood, Miles, *xxv*, 60, 61, 71, 82, 83  
 Flux, 73, 114  
 Franciscans, the, *xxiv*, and *passim*  
 Franks, 159, 169-71  
 French relations with Abyssinia, *xxvi*, *xxviii*, *xxix-xxxii*, 140, 170 trade with Mocha, 173 merchants in Cairo, 60, 61, 82, 170  
 Funerals in Abyssinia, 150  
 Fungī (tribe), 97  
  
 Gabriel, the angel, 26 (2), 37  
*Gaf*, 174  
*Galeiat*, 177  
 Gallas, the, 128, 147  
 Gama, Cristovão da, 124  
 Gandava (river), 112  
 Gandil, 100, 167  
  
 Gaidiner, —, 62.  
*Gaurekor*, 125  
*Geberitis*, 110, 125.  
 Gelingue, 109  
 Gella, 176  
 Genoa, 58, 59  
 Germans, 15, 71  
 Gerri, 95, 101, 167, Governor of, 101  
 Gibbal Pharoön, 181  
 Giesim, 108, 110  
 Ginger, 127  
 Girana, 110, 112, 113  
 Gurga, 94  
 Gizan, 178  
 Goats, 15, 177  
 Gobien, Fathci Le, *xxviii*, *xxix*, *xxxvi*, *xxxvii*, 115  
 Gojjam, province of, 125, 134, gold mines in, 126  
 Gold, 105, 149, mined, 126, found in streams, 127, trade in, 96, 107, 113, 155, 176, used for currency, 121, 126  
 Gondar, 95, situation of, 115, described, 121, palace at, 115, 118, 120, 129, 135, churches at, 117, 122  
 Goodman, —, 61  
 Gorech, Prince, 107  
 Grabs, 173, 177  
 Grapes, 120, 137, 169, 178, 180  
 Greeks, *passim*, in Egypt, 10, 11  
 Green turbans worn only by descendants of the Prophet, 11, 27  
 Gregorius, 140  
 Gregory, 134, 183  
 Grenier, Fathci, *xxv*, *xxxvi*, 168  
  
*Habash*, 124  
 Habbash, 26  
 Hagar, 34  
 Hajī Ali, 93, 168, character of, 168  
 Hajī Asaf, 71  
 Hajī Bairam, 62-4  
*Hajrs*, *passim*  
 Halawa, 95 (3), 166  
 Hammam Mūsa, 180  
 Hanah sect, 32, 40  
 Hanbali sect, 32  
 Harbagi, 95, 101, 167  
 Harib, 167  
 Hassama (island), 160  
 Helcia, Princess, 121  
 Helena, Empress, 81, 148  
 Heleni, 148  
 Helfage *See* Alfao  
 Hicks, Captain, 83  
 Hides, 10, 136  
 Hippopotamuses, 134-6

- Hodeida, 73, 177 (2)  
 Honey, 70, 103, 120.  
 'Hoodwinked', 7  
 Horub, Mt., 80, 81  
 Horses, 98, 110, 118, 140, 146, 151,  
 166, 168  
 Hyenas, 112  
  
 Ibnali, 93  
 Ibrahim, *Erbab*, 100  
*Ihrām*, 21, 23, 31, 34, 37, 159, 179  
*Imām*, 32, 36  
 Incense, 40, 115, 139, 150  
 Innocent XII, 111, 111  
 Iron, trade in, 107  
 Irwin, Eyles, 111, 68*n*  
 Ishmael, 34, 36, 37, 70  
 Israelites, 80, 81, cross the Red Sea,  
 19, 20, 66, 180, 181  
 Ivory, 105, 107, 155, 176  
 Iyasu, the Negus, *passim* his wives,  
 120, 125, 171, his children, 115, 117,  
 118, 130, 131, 141, 145, 147, his  
 sister, 121, his title, 126, 130, his  
 character, 111, 130, murdered,  
 111, 130, 135  
  
 Jabal Attair, 177  
 Jabal Musā, 80  
*Janyamāya*, 21  
 Jamsuph, 66  
 Janizaries, 16, and *passim*  
 Jessamine, 128, 145  
 Jesuits, 111, and *passim*  
 Jews, 10, 11, 19, 20, 66, 80, 180, 181  
 Jidda, described, 157, 159, 179 Pittsat,  
 22, Daniel at, 70, 74-6, Poncet at,  
 157-60, Ovington's account of,  
 178, Albuquerque and, 77, Indian  
 ships at, 68, 71, trade of, 63, 157,  
 159, 177, 179, raided by the Sharif,  
 74, 158, Governor of, 74, 158  
 Jonquils, 127  
 Joseph (an Ethiopian), 104, 168  
 Joseph (the Patriarch), 18  
 Joseph, Dom, 111  
 Joseph's Granaries, 61  
 Joseph's Well, 18, 61  
 Justice, administration of, in Sennar,  
 104, in Abyssinia, 131  
 Justinian, 162, 180  
 Jutor, 177  
  
 Kaa, 130  
 Ka'ba, the, 23, described, 23, 28, 29,  
 78, built by Abraham, 10, 22, 25, 33,  
 78, covering of, 3, 30  
*Kabir*, 175  
  
*Kafan*, 38  
 Kamarān (island), 73, 177.  
*Kashif*, 95  
*Khan* (inn), 13, 17, 62  
*Khatib*, 40  
 Kishin, 173, 176  
*Kitar*, 42  
*Kohl*, 107  
 Korti, 95, 100, 167  
 Kshabi, 95  
  
 Lafta, 122  
 Lamb and Basket, 58, 83  
 Laurel bushes, 134  
 Lebanon, the, 15  
 Leghorn, 5, 8, 59  
 Libyan desert, 93, 94, 100, 166  
 Lilies, 127, 145  
 Linen, 9, 10, 93, 97, 98, 163  
 Lions, 112  
 Litters, 42  
*Livre*, 105, 122  
 Lobo, Father, 134, 183  
 Lockman, John, 111  
 Lokie (river), 77  
 Louis XIV, 111, 111, 116, 119, 140  
 Ludolf, Hiob, and his map, 111, 182  
 Luhaya, 73, 177 (2) See also 'Yemen'  
 (port of)  
*Lumi*, 179  
 Lyons, 58  
  
 Madagascar, pirates at, 69  
*Madida*, 174  
*Mahrib*, 3, 39  
*Mihlab*, 98, 107  
 Mullet, Charles de, 111-111, 170,  
 De Biéudent's letter to 166, Pon-  
 cet writes to, 164, 168, his letter to  
 the Negus, 116, 171, interrogates  
 Poncet, 170, his dealings with  
 Murīd, 111-111, 164 his further  
 attempts to negotiate with Abyssinia,  
 111  
 Malabar, coast of, 173  
 Malakotawit, 120, 125  
 Malek, 100, 167  
 Maliki sect, 32  
 Malta, 5  
 Manfalūt, 93  
 'Marabbot', 20, 21  
 Marble, 149  
 Marchant, Walter, 61  
 Marcus Aurelius, 61  
 Mareb (river), 147, 151  
 Marsa Ibrahim, 156  
 Marseilles, 58, 83-5.  
*Mashal*, 41.

- Massawa, 168, 169; described, 154.  
 Poncet at, 154-6, 169, English ship at, 154, 169, Governor of, 154, 156  
 Maund, 174  
 Maushij, 176.  
*Mazār*, 62.  
 Mecca, the city of, 24-6, 78, the temple at (*see also* Ka'ba), 22, 27, 31, 78, people of, 25, house room at, 4, 5, immorality at, 40, Muhammad born at, 78, 159, 178. caravans to, 3, 4, 158, the pilgrimage a duty, 3.  
 Mecca, the Sharif of, xliii, 30, 31, 157-9, 161, 163, plunders Jidda, 74, 158.  
 Medina: described, 46, 47, 76, 77, Pitts at, 46, 47, Poncet on, 159, its distance from Mecca, 4, 46, Yenbo the port of, 67, 180, the chief mosque, 4, 44-7, 77, Muhammad's tomb in, 4, 44-7, 68, 76, 77, 159, 180.  
 Meks, 95.  
 Memphis, 61.  
*Menta*, 119  
 Metheglin, 106, 118, 119, how made, 120.  
*Mish*, 143.  
*Misir*, 3.  
 Mocha, 107, described, 173, trade of, 73, 107, 173-7, customs duties at, 174, currency, &c., at, 174; Indian ships at, 71, 84, Daniel at, 71, 72; German at, 71, Governor of, 72, 174.  
 Mogul Emperor, the, 133, 175, 176.  
 Monaco, 59  
 Monhenaut, C J de, xxi, 170.  
 Monkeys, 128, 146.  
 Monks, in Abyssinia, *passim*, costumes of, 139, 149, massacre of, 123, demonstrations by, 169  
 Moon, Mountains of the, 75  
 Morocco, 3, 32, 74.  
 Moscho, 95, described, 96, 166.  
 Moses, 80, 81 (4), 137, 163, 180.  
*Muezzin*, 32, 33.  
*Musfi*, 78.  
 Muhammad, 29, born at Mecca, 78, 159, 178, his cave there, 26; his tomb, *see* Medina, Gabriel and, 26 (2)  
 Muhammadans in Abyssinia, 137, 147, 151, unpopular, 124, 125.  
 Mules, 96, 110, 123  
 Mummies, 61.  
 Muna, 36-8.  
 Murād, the elder, xxviii, 133, 134, 137, 140, 143, 170, his embassies, 133, 168  
 Murād, the younger, xxviii, xxx, 124, 135, interprets for Poncet, 171, chosen as ambassador to France, 140, presents sent with, 140, 145, 146, 151, 163, 168, 171, his journey to Egypt, 141, 142, 151, 155, 160, 163, 168, arrives, 164, his proceedings at Cairo, xlii-xlii, 170-2, his subsequent history, xlii, xlii, his character, 171.  
 Musk, 38, 64.  
 Muskat, xv, 72, 173.  
 Muskets, 97.  
 Muslins, 11, 64, 117.  
 Mutton, 119, 178  
 Muwailih, 47, 65, 161  
 Myrrh, trade in, 155, 176.  
 Nerea (province), 125.  
 Nile, the, sources of, 75, 133, 134, overflowing of, 9, 62, 75, 76, 127, mouths of, 8, 9, 10, 60, 75, water of, 8, 12, 14, 48, 76, robberies on, 10, Poncet's voyage up, 93.  
 Nubians, 97, 130.  
 Ogara (province), 144, 145.  
 Olibanum, 176.  
 Olive trees, 138, 152.  
 Onofrius, St., 82.  
 'Oquel', 157, 158  
 Oranges, 118, 128, 145.  
 Ovington, Rev. John, 173, his notes, 173-81.  
*Padrone*, 6, 9, 16, 27, 28, 47, 49, 59  
 Pacz, Pedro, 134.  
 Palm-trees, 94, 96, 109, 180.  
 Paper, trade in, 107.  
 Paris, 58, 112, 145.  
*Parrah*, 12-17.  
 Parrots, 102.  
 Paulet, Father, 168.  
 Pearls, 64, fishing for, 107, 154, 178  
 Pelicans, 10.  
 Pepper, 98  
 Persia, 78, 179.  
 Persia, Gulf of, 173.  
 Pharaoh, 19, 181.  
 Philppos, Father, 153 (2).  
 Piastre. *See* Eight, pieces of.  
 Pigeons at Mecca, 29  
 Pillar dollars, 175.  
 Pine-apples, Indian, 114.  
 Pinkerton, John, xxvi.  
 Pinks, 145.  
 Pirates, depredations of, 69, 175, 177.  
 Pistoles, 58.

Pitts, Joseph, his early history, 11, his journey, 1-49, his subsequent career, xi, his book, xiii  
 Plague in Cairo, 48, 61, 75, 76, 82, 83, 99 in Alexandria, 49 in Upper Egypt, 99  
 Poisoned weapons, 129  
 Polygamy, 137  
 Pomegranates, 112, 128, 145  
 Poncet, Charles Jacques his early history, xiii, 114, 140, 162, his narrative, 89-165, his letter from Jidda, 168 examined at Cairo, 170-2, his book, xiii, his ill health, 114-16, 129, 140, 145, his later history, xiii  
 Portuguese, the, 115, 154, expelled from Abyssinia, 124, 125 unpopular there, 124, 137, trade with Mocha, 173  
 Potiphar, 18  
 Purple for mourning, 124  
 Pyramids, the, 13, 61  
 Qadumbal (island), 156  
*Qafrah*, 174  
*Qarāfa*, 61  
 Quarantine, 83  
*Qunfidha*, 157, 178  
*Qur'ān*, the, 26, 40, 41, 71, 77  
*Qurbān Bāram*, the, 4, 34, 36  
 Rabegh, 21  
 Rainy season, the 106, 111, 127, 141  
*Ra'is*, 169  
*Ramazān*, 13, and *passim*  
*Ranunculus*, 145  
 Ras Muhammad (cape), 79, 180  
 Reb (river), 132  
 Red Sea, *passim*, origin of name, 65 length and breadth of, 20, 65, dangers of reefs in, 20, 65, 66, 156, 160, 179, native craft in, 19, 20, 47, 63, 64, 73, 110, 156, 159, 160, 179  
 Religion in Abyssinia, 132, 137 *See also* Church  
 Rials *See* Eight, pieces of  
 Rice, 10, 17, 70, 72, trade in, 163  
 Roebucks, 146  
 Rome, 149  
 Roses, 128, 145  
 Rosetta, 10, Pitts at, 7, 8, 48, Daniel at, 60, 75 (2)  
 Roule, Noir du, xiii  
 Russians, 15  
 St Amand, D, 58  
 St Anthony's Cross, 105

*St Augustino*, 59  
 St Claude (island) 135, 136  
 St Tropez, 58  
 Silt, trade in, 176, used for currency, 121, 122, mines of, 122  
 Samaritan Jews, 66  
 Sameri (island), 66  
 San Remo, 59  
 Sa'na, 176  
 Saracens, 70, 81  
 Sarah, 70  
 Saravi (province), 146  
 Scanderoon, 59, 60  
 Seals, 134  
 Scamond (island), 66  
 Selima, 95, 96, 166  
 Senna, 95, 96, 174, 176  
 Sennar, 93, 130, 167, route to, 95, described, 102, trade of, 107, slaves sold in, 105, prices at, 105, currency at, 105, religion and costumes at, 106, boundary of, 111  
 Sennar, King of, 96, 97, 100, 102-4, 113, 167, relatives of, 94, 107, 110, his palace, 102, 105, 168, his court, 102  
 Sequins, 70, 74, 175  
 Serke, 111  
 Shābb (شعب), 95, 96, 166  
 Shafe'i sect, 32  
*Shāikh*, 100, 166 (3), 167  
*Sham*, 4  
 Sharif *See* Mecca  
 Sheba, Queen of, 149  
 Sherm, Daniel at 79, Poncet at, 161, described, 79, 161  
 Ships, local, in Red Sea, 19, 20, 47, 63, 64, 73, 110, 156, 159, 160, 178, 179, 181, their water-tank, 160  
 Shūc, province of, 145 Governor of, 145, town of, 145  
 Shroffs, 175  
 'Shykes', 8  
 Silk, 11, 12, 64, 106, 116, 130  
 Sinai, Mt, 48, 163, 180 account of, 80, called 'Too! Dog', 19 mosque on, 81, grotto on, 82, Greek monastery on, 19, 81, 161, 162, 180, Patriarch of, 80, 2, 161-3, Prioi of, 162 Lthiopian princes at, 80, Daniel goes there, 79-82, Poncet's visit, 161-4  
 Slavery, 15, 16, 96, 105, 110, 136  
 Smallpox, 101  
 Soap, 97  
*Soccori*, 107  
 Sokotra, 173, 176  
*Sol*, 105  
 Solicoffre, Daniel, 83

- Sonany, 176.  
 Sonnone, 111.  
 Sovaire, Captain, 43.  
 Spahis, 93, 95.  
 Spaniards, 6, 7, 49, 134.  
 Spices, 11, 64, 107.  
 Spikenard, 98, 107.  
*Squintantes*, 112.  
 Suakin, 107, 176, Governor of, 154;  
     pearl-fishery at, 107, 154.  
 Sublimat, 107.  
 Sudan, the, 96, King of, 96.  
 Suez, Isthmus of, 63.  
 Suez (port), trade of, 63, 163, 179 (2),  
     180, 181, water at, 19, Governor of,  
     164, Pitts at, 19, Daniel at, 63, 64;  
     Poncet at, 164, Ovington's account  
     of, 181.  
 Sugar, 10, 70, 72.  
*Sultanin*, 31.  
 Surat, 107, 169, 173, 177, ships built  
     at, 156, 160, 181, English factory at,  
     69, 173, 175, 176.  
 Suscnvos, the Negus, 125.  
 Sycomores, 112.  
 Syria, 4, 15, 115.  
  
*Taddo*, 120.  
 Taffeta, 104, 126.  
 Takkaze (river), 112, 145, 147.  
 Tamarinds, 105, 111, 155.  
 Tambisso, 111.  
 Tana, Lake, 75, 134-6.  
 Taitan, 59.  
 Tartar, 4, 15, 46.  
*Tan af*, 23, and *passim*.  
 Taylor, John, 111.  
 Telles, Baltasar, 183-5.  
 Tenket, 123.  
 Thalers, 175.  
 Thévenot, Jean de, quoted, 12, 33,  
     36, 65, 71.  
 Tigrat, province of, 125, 146, Govern-  
     or of, 125, 146, 152, language of,  
     145.  
 Tobacco, 70, 105.  
 Tor (port), 163, described, 161, 180;  
     Governor of, 161, Pitts at, 19, Pon-  
     cet at, 161, 164.  
 Tortoises, 154.  
 Trapani, 59.  
 Treasurer, High, in Abyssinia, 118,  
     141 (2).  
  
 Trere, 95.  
 Tripoli (Syria), 114.  
 Tulips, 127, 145.  
*Tūmān*, 174.  
 Tunis, 6, 83.  
 'Tunnel', 121, 144.  
 Turkey, 46, trade with Mocha, 173,  
     ducats, 175, Sultan of, *passim*.  
 Turks (= Muhammadans), 104, and  
     *passim*.  
 Tzemba, 131-3, 137, Abbot at, 132,  
     133.  
  
 Umbrella, 127.  
  
 Venetian glass, 107.  
 Venetians, 8, 82.  
 Vermilion, 107.  
 Vernon, —, 61.  
 Verseau, Father, xxvi, 111, 168.  
 Vert, Father, 168.  
  
 Wacha, 95.  
 Waghorn, Thomas, 111.  
*Wāqiyat*, 174.  
 Water-wheels, 18, 97.  
 Whitney, James, 69.  
 Wine, not drunk in Sennar or Abyssinia,  
     106, 120, 137.  
 Wood-bons, 102.  
 Wood, scaice, 14.  
  
 Xavier, St. Francis, 114.  
  
 Yemen, kingdom of, 118, 71, 78,  
     178, King of, 71, 107, 178, coffee  
     trade of, 71, 155.  
 'Yemen', port of, 71, 72, trade of, 73,  
     Governor of, 71-3, 88. *See also*  
     Luhaiya.  
 Yenbo, described, 161, Daniel at,  
     67-70, 76-9, Poncet at, 161, Oving-  
     ton's account of, 179 (2), the port  
     of Medina, 67, 180, Governor of,  
     68-70.  
  
 Zabid, 69, 73, 176.  
 Zaflān (lake), 75.  
*Zakāt*, 78.  
 Zam Zam (well), 28, 33, 34, 38, 39, 78.  
 Zeila, 176.  
 Zembree (lake), 75.

